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THE BRIDE
OF THE
NILE

A highly ornate, symmetrical decorative ornament in gold. It features a central shield-like shape with a banner across it containing the words 'OF THE'. Above the banner are two large, stylized wings or feathers. Below the banner is a circular medallion with a winged figure (likely a sphinx or griffin) and a caduceus-like staff with a snake entwined around it. The entire design is set against a dark, textured background.

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THE BRIDE OF THE NILE

a. r.
A ROMANCE

ms
BY
GEORG EBERS

Author of "Serapis," etc.

FROM THE GERMAN BY CLARA BELL

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. 1.

—AUTHORIZED EDITION—

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TO HERR CARL HALLBERGER

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK AT THE CLOSE OF A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF FAITHFUL AND UNBROKEN FRIENDSHIP, WHICH TIME HAS ONLY SERVED TO STRENGTHEN.

GEORG EBERS.

M103732

PREFACE.

THE "Bride of the Nile" needs no preface. For the professional student I may observe that I have relied on the authority of de Goeje in adhering to my own original opinion that the word Mukaukas is not to be regarded as a name but as a title, since the Arab writers to which I have made reference apply it to the responsible representatives of the Byzantine Emperor in antagonism to the Moslem power. I was unfortunately unable to make further use of Karabacek's researches as to the Mukaukas.

I shall not be held justified in placing the ancient Horus Apollo (Horapollo) in the seventh century after Christ by any one who regards the author of the Hieroglyphica as identical with the Egyptian philosopher of the same name who, according to Suidas, lived under Theodosius, and to whom Stephanus of Byzantium refers, writing so early as at the end of the fifth century. But the lexicographer Suidas enumerates the works of Horapollo, the philologer and commentator on Greek poetry, without naming the Hieroglyphica, which is the only treatise alluded to by Stephanus. Besides, all the other ancient writers who mention Horapollo at all leave us quite free to suppose that there may have been two sages of the same

name — as does C. Leemans, who is most intimately versed in the Hieroglyphica — and the second certainly cannot have lived earlier than the VIIth century, since an accurate knowledge of hieroglyphic writing must have been lost far more completely in his time than we can suppose possible in the IVth century. It must be remembered that we still possess well-executed hieroglyphic inscriptions dating from the time of Decius, 250 years after Christ. Thus the Egyptian commentator on Greek poetry could hardly have needed a translator, whereas the Hieroglyphica seems to have been first rendered into Greek by Philippus. The combination by which the author called in Egyptian Horus (the son of Isis) is supposed to have been born in Philae, where the cultus of the Egyptian heathen was longest practised, and where some familiarity with hieroglyphics must have been preserved to a late date, takes into due account the real state of affairs at the period I have selected for my story.

GEORG EBERS.

October 1st, 1886.

THE BRIDE OF THE NILE.

CHAPTER I.

HALF a lustrum had elapsed since Egypt had become subject to the youthful power of the Arabs, which had risen with such unexampled vigor and rapidity. It had fallen an easy prey, cheaply bought, into the hands of a small, well-captained troop of Moslem warriors; and the fair province, which so lately had been a jewel of the Byzantine Empire and the most faithful foster-mother to Christianity, now owned the sway of the Khalif Omar and saw the Crescent raised by the side of the Cross.

It was long since a hotter season had afflicted the land; and the Nile, whose rising had been watched for on the Night of Dropping—the 17th of June—with the usual festive preparations, had cheated the hopes of the Egyptians, and instead of rising had shrunk narrower and still narrower in its bed.—It was in this time of sore anxiety, on the 10th of July, A. D. 643, that a caravan from the North reached Memphis.

It was but a small one; but its appearance in the decayed and deserted city of the Pyramids—which had grown only lengthwise, like a huge reed-leaf, since

its breadth was confined between the Nile and the Libyan Hills — attracted the gaze of the passers-by, though in former years a Memphite would scarcely have thought it worth while to turn his head to gaze at an interminable pile of wagons loaded with merchandise, an imposing train of vehicles drawn by oxen, the flashing mantles of the imperial cavalry, or an endless procession wending its way down the five miles of high street.

The merchant who, riding a dromedary of the choicest breed, conducted this caravan, was a lean Moslem of mature age, robed in soft silk. A vast turban covered his small head and cast a shadow over his delicate and venerable features.

The Egyptian guide who rode on a brisk little ass by his side, looked up frequently and with evident pleasure at the merchant's face — not in itself a handsome one with its hollow cheeks, meagre beard and large aquiline nose — for it was lighted up by a pair of bright eyes, full of attractive thoughtfulness and genuine kindness. But that this fragile-looking man, in whose benevolent countenance grief and infirmities had graven many a furrow, could not only command but compel submission was legible alike in his thin, firmly-closed lips and in the zeal with which his following of truculent and bearded fighting men, armed to the teeth, obeyed his slightest sign.

His Egyptian attendant, the head of the Hermeneutai — the guild of the Dragomans of that period — was a swarthy and surly native of Memphis; whenever he accidentally came too close to the fierce-looking riders of the dromedaries he shrunk his shoulders as if he expected a blow or a push, while he poured out

question and answer to the Merchant Haschim, the owner of the caravan, without timidity and with the voluble garrulity of his tribe.

"You seem very much at home here in Memphis," he observed, when the old man had expressed his surprise at the decadence and melancholy change in the city.

"Thirty years ago," replied the merchant, "my business often brought me hither. How many houses are now empty and in ruins where formerly only heavy coin could secure admittance! Ruins on all sides! — Who has so cruelly mutilated that fine church? My fellow-believers left every Christian fane untouched — that I know from our chief Amrû himself."

"It was the principal church of the Melchites, the Emperor's minions," cried the guide, as if that were ample explanation of the fact. The merchant, however, did not take it so.

"Well," he said, "and what is there so dreadful in their creed?"

"What?" said the Egyptian, and his eye flashed wrathfully. "What? — They dismember the divine person of the Saviour and attribute to it two distinct natures. And then! — All the Greeks settled here, and encouraged by the protection of the emperor, treated us, the owners of the land, like slaves, till your nation came to put an end to their oppression. They drove us by force into their churches, and every true-born Egyptian was punished as a rebel and a leper. They mocked at us and persecuted us for our faith in the one divine nature of our Lord."

"And so," interrupted the merchant, "as soon as we drove out the Greeks you behaved more unmerci-

fully to them and their sanctuaries than we — whom you scorn as infidels — did to you !”

“Mercy ? — for them !” cried the Egyptian indignantly, as he cast an evil eye on the demolished edifice. “They have reaped what they sowed ; and now every one in Egypt who does not believe in your One God — blessed be the Saviour ! — confesses the one sole nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. You drove out the Melchite rabble, and then it was our part to demolish the temples of their wretched Saviour, who lost His divine Unity at the synod of Chalcedon — damnation wait upon it !”

“But still the Melchites are fellow-believers with you — they are Christians,” said the merchant.

“Christians ?” echoed the guide with a contemptuous shrug. “They may regard themselves as Christians ; but I, with every one else great and small in this land, am of opinion that they have no right whatever to call themselves our fellow-believers and Christians. They all are and shall be for ever accursed with their hundreds — nay thousands of devilish heresies, by which they degrade our God and Redeemer to the level of that idol on the stone pillar. Half a cow and half a man ! Why, what rational being, I ask you, could pray to such a mongrel thing ? We Jacobites or Monophysites or whatever they choose to call us will not yield a jot or tittle of the divine nature of our Lord and Saviour ; and if the old faith must die out, I will turn Moslem and be converted to your One Omnipotent God ; for before I confess the heresies of the Melchites I will be hewn in pieces, and my wife and children with me. Who knows what may be coming to pass ? And there are many advantages in going

over to your side: for the power is in your hands, and long may you keep it! We have got to be ruled by strangers; and who would not rather pay small tribute to the wise and healthy Khalif at Medina than a heavy one to the sickly imperial brood of Melchites at Constantinople. The Mukaukas George, to be sure, is not a bad sort of man, and as he so soon gave up all idea of resisting you he was no doubt of my opinion. Regarding you as just and pious folks, as our next neighbors, and perhaps even of our own race and blood, he preferred you — my brother told me so — to those Byzantine heretics, flayers of men and thirsting for blood, but yet, the Mukaukas is as good a Christian as breathes."

The Arab had listened attentively and with a subtle smile to the Memphite, whose duties as guide now compelled him to break off. The Egyptian made the whole caravan turn down an alley that led into a street running parallel to the river, where a few fine houses still stood in the midst of their gardens. When men and beasts were making their way along a better pavement the merchant observed: "I knew the father of the man you were speaking of, very well. He was wealthy and virtuous; of his son too I hear nothing but good. But is he still allowed to bear the title of governor, or, what did you call him? — Mukaukas?"

"Certainly, Master," said the guide. "There is no older family than his in all Egypt, and if old Menas was rich the Mukaukas is richer, both by inheritance and by his wife's dower. Nor could we wish for a more sensible or a juster governor! He keeps his eye on his underlings too; still, business is not done now as briskly as formerly, for though he is not much older

than I am — and I am not yet sixty — he is always ailing and has not been seen out of the house for months. Even when your chief wants to see him he comes over to this side of the river. It is a pity with such a man as he; and who was it that broke down his stalwart strength? Why, those Melchite dogs; you may ask all along the Nile, long as it is, who was at the bottom of any misfortune, and you will always get the same answer: Wherever the Melchite or the Greek sets foot the grass refuses to grow."

"But the Mukaukas, the emperor's representative. . . ." the Arab began. The Egyptian broke in however:

"He, you think, must be safe from them? They did not certainly injure his person; but they did worse, for when the Melchites rose up against our party — it was at Alexandria, and the late Greek patriarch Cyrus had a finger in that pie — they killed his two sons, two fine, splendid men — killed them like dogs; and it crushed him completely."

"Poor man!" sighed the Arab. "And has he no child left?"

"Oh, yes. One son, and the widow of his eldest. She went into a convent after her husband's death, but she left her child, her little Mary — she must be ten years old now — to live with her grandparents."

"That is well," said the old man, "that will bring some sunshine into the house."

"No doubt, Master. And just lately they have had some cause for rejoicing. The only surviving son — Orion is his name — came home only the day before yesterday from Constantinople where he has been for a long time. There was a to-do! Half the city went

crazy. Thousands went out to meet him, as though he were the Saviour; they erected triumphal arches, even folks of my creed — no one thought of hanging back. One and all wanted to see the son of the great Mukaukas, and the women of course were first and foremost!"

"You speak, however," said the Arab, "as though the returning hero were not worthy of so much honor."

"That is as folks think," replied the Egyptian shrugging his shoulders. "At any rate he is the only son of the greatest man in the land."

"But he does not promise to be like the old man?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said the guide. "My brother, a priest, and the head of one of our great schools, was his tutor, and he never met such a clever head as Orion's, he tells me. He learnt everything without any trouble and at the same time worked as hard as a poor man's son. We may expect him to win fame and honor — so Marcus says — for his parents and for the city of Memphis: but for my part, I can see the shady side, and I tell you the women will turn his head and bring him to a bad end. He is handsome, taller even than the old man in his best days, and he knows how to make the most of himself when he meets a pretty face — and pretty faces are always to be met in his path..."

"And the young rascal takes what he finds!" said the Moslem laughing. "If that is all you are alarmed at I am glad for the youth. He is young and such things are allowable."

"Nay, Sir, even my brother — he lives now in Alexandria, and is blind and foolish enough still in all that concerns his former pupil — and even he thinks this is a dangerous rock ahead. If he does not

change in this respect he will wander further and further from the law of the Lord, and imperil his soul, for dangers surround him on all sides like roaring lions. The noble gifts of a handsome and engaging person will lead him to his ruin; and though I do not desire it, I suspect. . . .”

“You look on the dark side and judge hardly,” replied the old man. “The young. . . .”

“Even the young, or at least the Christian young, ought to control themselves, though I, if any one, am inclined to make the utmost allowance for the handsome lad—nay, and I may confess: when he smiles at me I feel at once as if I had met with some good-luck; and there are a thousand other men in Memphis who feel the same, and still more the women you may be sure—but many a one has shed bitter tears on his account for all that.—But, by all the saints!—Talk of the wolf and you see his tail! Look, there he is!—Halt! Stop a minute, you men; it is worth while, Sir, to tarry a moment.”

“Is that his fine quadriga in front of the high garden gate yonder?”

“Those are the Pannonian horses he brought with him, as swift as lightning and as But look! Ah, now they have disappeared behind the hedge; but you, high up on your dromedary, must be able to see them. The little maid by his side is the widow Susannah’s daughter. This garden and the beautiful mansion behind the trees belong to her.”

“A very handsome property!” said the Arab.

“I should think so indeed!” replied the Memphite. “The garden goes down to the Nile, and then, what care is taken of it!”

"Was it not here that Philommon the corn-merchant lived formerly?" asked the old man, as though some memories were coming back to him.

"To be sure. He was Susannah's husband and must have been a man of fifty when he first wooed her. The little girl is their only child and the richest heiress in the whole province; but she is not altogether grown up though she is sixteen years old—an old man's child, you understand, but a pretty, merry creature, a laughing dove in human form, and so quick and lively. Her own people call her the little water-wagtail."

"Good! — Good and very appropriate," said the merchant well pleased. "She is small too, a child rather than a maiden; but the graceful, gladsome creature takes my fancy. And the governor's son — what is his name?"

"Orion, Sir," replied the guide.

"And by my beard," said the old man smiling. "You have not over-praised him, man! Such a youth as this Orion is not to be seen every day. What a tall fellow, and how becoming are those brown curls. Such as he are spoilt to begin with by their mothers, and then all the other women follow suit. And he has a frank, shrewd face with something behind it. If only he had left his purple coat and gold frippery in Constantinople! Such finery is out of place in this dismal ruinous city."

While he was yet speaking the Memphite urged his ass forward, but the Arab held him back, for his attention was rivetted by what was taking place within the enclosure. He saw handsome Orion place a small white dog, a silky creature of great beauty that evidently belonged to him — in the little maiden's arms;

saw her kiss it and then put a blade of grass round its neck as if to measure its size. The old man watched them as, both laughing gaily, they looked into each other's eyes and presently bid each other farewell. The girl stood on tiptoe in front of some rare shrub to reach two exquisite purple flowers that blossomed at the top, hastily plucked them and offered them to him with a deep blush; she pushed away the hand he had put out to support her as she stretched up for the flowers with a saucy slap; and a bright glance of happiness lighted up her sweet face as the young man kissed the place her fingers had hit, and then pressed the flowers to his lips. The old man looked on with sympathetic pleasure, as though it roused the sweetest memories in his mind; and his kind eyes shone as Orion, no less mischievously happy than the young girl, whispered something in her ear; she drew the long stem of grass out of her waist-belt to administer immediate and condign punishment withal, struck it across his face, and then fled over grass-plot and flower-bed, as swift as a roe, without heeding his repeated shouts of "Katharina! bewitching, big damsel, Katharina!" till she reached the house.

It was a charming little interlude. Old Haschim was still pondering it in his memory with much satisfaction when he and his caravan had gone some distance further. He felt obliged to Orion for this pretty scene, and when he heard the young man's quadriga approaching at an easy trot behind him, he turned round to gaze. But the Arab's face had lost its contentment by the time the four Pannonians and the chariot, overlaid with silver ornamentation and forming, with its driver, a picture of rare beauty and in perfect taste, had slowly

driven past, to fly on like the wind as soon as the road was clear, and to vanish presently in clouds of dust. There was something of melancholy in his voice as he desired his young camel-driver to pick up the flowers, which now lay in the dust of the road, and to bring them to him. He himself had observed the handsome youth as, with a glance and a gesture of annoyance with himself, he flung the innocent gift on the hot, sandy highway.

"Your brother is right," cried the old man to the Memphite. "Women are indeed the rock ahead in this young fellow's life — and he in theirs, I fear! Poor little girl!"

"The little water-wagtail do you mean? Oh! with her it may perhaps turn to real earnest. The two mothers have settled the matter already. They are both rolling in gold, and where doves nest doves resort. — Thank God, the sun is low down over the Pyramids! Let your people rest at the large inn yonder; the host is an honest man and lacks nothing, not even shade!"

"So far as the beasts and drivers are concerned," said the merchant, "they may stop here. But I, and the leader of the caravan, and some of my men will only take some refreshment, and then you must guide us to the governor; I have to speak with him. It is growing late. . ."

"That does not matter," said the Egyptian. "The Mukaukas prefers to see strangers after sundown on such a scorching day. If you have any dealings with him I am the very man for you. You have only to make play with a gold piece and I can obtain you an audience at once through Sebek, the house-steward — he is my cousin. While you are resting here I will ride

on to the governor's palace and bring you word as to how matters stand."

CHAPTER II.

THE caravansary into which Haschim and his following now turned off stood on a plot of rising ground surrounded by palm-trees. Before the destruction of the heathen sanctuaries it had been a temple of Imhotep, the Egyptian Esculapius, the beneficent god of healing, who had had his places of special worship even in the city of the dead. It was half ruined, half buried in desert sand when an enterprising inn-keeper had bought the elegant structure with the adjacent grove for a very moderate sum. Since then it had passed to various owners, a large wooden building for the accommodation of travellers had been added to the massive edifice, and among the palm-trees, which extended as far as the ill-repaired quay, stables were erected and plots of ground fenced in for beasts of all kinds. The whole place looked like a cattle-fair, and indeed it was a great resort of the butchers and horse-dealers of the town, who came there to purchase. The palm-grove, being one of the few remaining close to the city, also served the Memphites as a pleasure-ground where they could "sniff fresh air" and treat themselves in a pleasant shade. Tables and seats had been set out close to the river, and there were boats on hire in mine host's little creek; and those who took their pleasure in coming thither by water were glad to put in and refresh themselves under the palms of Nesptah.

Two rows of houses had formerly divided this rendezvous for the sober and the reckless from the high-road, but they had long since been pulled down and laid level with the ground by successive landlords. Even now some hundreds of laborers might be seen, in spite of the scorching heat, toiling under Arab overseers to demolish a vast ruin of the date of the Ptolemies, and transporting the huge blocks of limestone and marble, and the numberless columns which once had supported the roof of the temple of Zeus, to the eastern shore of the Nile — loading them on to trucks drawn by oxen which hauled them down to the quay to cross the river in flat-bottomed boats.

Amrû, the Khaliff's general and representative, was there building his new capital. For this the temples of the old gods were used as quarries, and they supplied not only finely-squared blocks of the most durable stone, but also myriads of Greek columns of every order, which had only to be ferried over and set up again on the other shore; for the Arabs disdained nothing in the way of materials, and made indiscriminate use of blocks and pillars in their own sanctuaries, whether they took them from heathen temples or Christian churches.

The walls of the temple of Imhotep had originally been completely covered with pictures of the gods, and hieroglyphic inscriptions; but the smoke of reeking hearths had long since blackened them, fanatical hands had never been wanting to deface them, and in many places they had been lime-washed and scrawled with Christian symbols or very unchristian mottoes, in Greek and the spoken dialect of the Egyptians. The Arab and his men took their meal in what had been the

great hall of the temple—none of them drinking wine excepting the captain of the caravan, who was no Moslem but belonged to the Parsee sect of the Masdakites.

When the old merchant, sitting at a table by himself, had satisfied his hunger, he called this chief and desired him to load the bale containing the hanging on a litter between the two largest baggage camels, and to fasten it securely but so that it could easily be removed.

"It is done," replied the Persian, as he wiped his thick moustache—he was a magnificent man as tall and stalwart as an oak, with light flowing hair like a lion's mane.

"So much the better," said Haschim. "Then come out with me." And he led the way to the palm-grove.

The sun had sunk to rest behind the pyramids, the Necropolis, and the Libyan hills; the eastern sky, and the bare limestone rock of Babylon on the opposite shore were shining with hues of indescribable diversity and beauty. It seemed as though every variety of rose reared by the skilled gardeners of Arsinoë or Naukratis had yielded its hues, from golden buff to crimson and the deepest wine-tinted violet, to shed their magic glow on the plains, the peaks and gorges of the hills, with the swiftness of thought.

The old man's heart beat high as he gazed at the scene; he drew a deep breath, and laying his slender hand on the Persian's mighty arm he said: "Your prophet, Masdak, taught that it was God's will that no one should think himself more or less chosen than another, and that there should be neither rich nor poor

on earth, but that every possession should belong to all in common. Well, look around you here as I do. The man who has not seen this has seen nothing. There is no fairer scene here below and to whom does it belong? To poor simple Salech yonder, whom we allowed to tramp half naked at our camels' heels out of pity.—It is his as much as it is yours or mine or the Khaliff's. God has given us all an equal share in the glory of his works; as your prophet would have it. How much beauty is the common possession of our race! Let us be thankful for it, Rustem, for indeed it is no small matter. — But as to property, such as man may win or lose, that is quite a different matter. We all start on the same race-course, and what you Masdakites ask is that lead should be tied to the feet of the swift so that no one should outstrip another; but that would be. . . . Well, well! Let us feast our eyes now on the marvellous beauty before us. Look: What just now was the purple of this flower is now deep ruby red; what before was a violet gleam now is the richest amethyst. Do you see the golden fringe to those clouds? It is like a setting. — And all this is ours—is yours and mine—so long as we have eyes and heart to enjoy and be uplifted by it!"

The Masdakite laughed, a fresh, sonorous laugh, and said: "Yes, Master, for those who see as you see. The colors are bright no doubt over the sky and the hills, and we do not often see such a red as that at home in my country; but of what use is all that magic show? You see rubies and amethysts—but as for me! The gems in your hanging stand for something more than that shining show. I mean no harm, Master, but I would give all the sunsets that ever glowed on earth for your

bales and never repent of the bargain!" He laughed more heartily than before and added: "But you, worthy Father, would think twice before you signed it. — As to what we Masdakites hope for, our time is not yet come."

"And suppose it were, and that the hanging were yours?"

"I should sell it and add the price to my savings, and go home and buy some land, and take a pretty wife, and breed camels and horses."

"And next day would come the poorer men who had laid nothing by, and had made no bargain over hangings and sunsets; and they would ask for a share of your land, and a camel and a foal each, and you would not be able ever to see a sunset again but must wander about the world, and your pretty wife with you to help you share everything with others. — Let us abide by the old order, my Rustem, and may the Most High preserve you your good heart, for you have but a foolish and crotchety head."

The big man bent over his master and gratefully kissed his arm; at this moment the guide rejoined them, but with a long face for he had promised more than he could perform. The Mukaukas George had set out—a quite unheard of event—for an excursion on the river in his barge, with his son and the ladies of the house just as he was hoping to secure an audience for the Arab. Orion's return—the steward had explained—had made the old man quite young again. Haschim must now wait till the morrow, and he, the guide, would counsel him to pass the night in the city at an inn kept by one Moschion, where he would be well cared for.

But the merchant preferred to remain where he was. He did not care about the delay, more particularly as he wished to consult an Egyptian physician with regard to an old standing complaint he suffered from, and there was no more skilful or learned leech in the whole land, the Egyptian guide assured him, than the famous Philip of Memphis. The situation here, outside the town, was very pleasant, and from the river's bank he might observe the comet which had been visible for some nights past — a portent of evil no doubt. The natives of the city had been paralysed with terror; that indeed was evident even here in Nesptah's caravansary, for usually as the evening grew cool, the tables and benches under the palms were crowded with guests; but who would care to think of enjoyment in those days of dread?

So he remounted his ass to fetch the physician, while old Haschim, leaning on the Masdakite's arm, betook himself to a bench by the river. There he sat gazing thoughtfully at the starry sky, and his companion dreamed of home and of buying a meadow, even without the price of the gorgeous hanging, of building a house, and of choosing a pretty little wife to manage it. — Should she be fair or dark? He would rather she should be fair.

But his castle in the air was shattered at this point, for an object was approaching across the Nile which attracted his attention, and which he pointed out to his chief. The stream lay before them like a broad belt of black and silver brocade. The waxing moon was mirrored in the almost unruffled surface and where a ripple curled it the tiny crest glittered like white flame. Bats swooped to and fro in the gloom from the city of the

dead to the river, and flitted above it like shadows blown about by the wind. A few lateen sails moved like pale, gigantic birds over the dark waters; but now from the north—and from the city—a larger mass came towards the palm-grove with bright, gleaming eyes of light.

"A fine boat,—the governor's no doubt," said the merchant, as it slowly came towards the grove from the middle of the stream. At the same time the clatter of hoofs became audible from the road behind the inn. Haschim turned round and was aware of torch-bearers running ahead of a chariot.

"The sick man has come so far by water," said the Arab, "and now, he is to be driven home. — Strange! this is the second time to-day that I have met his much-talked-of son!"

The governor's pleasure-barge was nearing the palm-grove. It was a large and handsome boat, built of cedar-wood and richly gilt, with an image of John, the patron-saint of the family, for a figure-head. The nimbus round the head was a crown of lamps, and large lanterns shone both at the bows and stern of the vessel. The Mukaukas George was reclining under an awning, his wife Neforis by his side. Opposite to them sat their son and a tall young girl, at whose feet a child of ten sat on the ground, leaning her pretty head against her knees. An older Greek woman, the child's governess, had a place by the side of a very tall man, on an ottoman beyond the verge of the awning. This man was Philip the leech. The cheerful sound of the lute accompanied the barge, and the performer was the returned wanderer Orion, who touched the strings with skill and deep feeling.

It was altogether a pleasing scene — a fair picture of a wealthy and united family. But who was the damsel sitting by Orion's side? He was devoting his whole attention to her; as he struck the strings with deeper emphasis his eyes sought hers, and it seemed as though he were playing for her alone. Nor did she appear unworthy of such homage, for when the barge ran into the little haven and Haschim could distinguish her features he was startled by her noble and purely Greek beauty.

A few handsomely-dressed slaves, who must have come with the vehicle by the road, now went on board the boat to carry their invalid lord to his chariot; and it then became apparent that the seat in which he reclined was provided with arms by which it could be lifted and moved. A burly negro took this at the back, but just as another was stooping to lift it in front Orion pushed him away and took his place, raised the couch with his father on it, and carried him across the landing-stage between the deck and the shore, past Haschim to the chariot. The young man did the work of bearer with cheerful ease, and looked affectionately at his father while he shouted to the ladies — for only his mother and the physician accompanied the invalid after carefully wrapping him in shawls — to get out of the barge and wait for him. Then he went forward, lighted by the torches which were carried before them.

"Poor man!" thought the merchant as he looked after the Mukaukas. "But to a man who has such a son to carry him the saddest and hardest lot floats by like a cloud before the wind."

He was now ready to forgive Orion even the re-

jected flowers; and when the young girl stepped on shore, the child clinging fondly to her arm, he confessed to himself that Dame Susannah's little daughter would find it hard indeed to hold her own by the side of this tall and royal vision of beauty. What a form was this maiden's, and what princely bearing; and how sweet and engaging the voice in which she named some of the constellations to her little companion, and pointed out the comet which was just rising!

Haschim was sitting in shadow; he could see without being seen, and note all that took place on the bench, which was lighted by one of the barge's lanterns. The unexpected entertainment gave him pleasure, for everything that affected the governor's son roused his sympathy and interest. The idea of forming an opinion of this remarkable young man smiled on his fancy, and the sight of the beautiful girl who sat on the bench yonder warmed his old heart. The child must certainly be Mary, the governor's granddaughter.

Then the chariot started off, clattering away down the road, and in a few minutes Orion came back to the rest of the party.

Alas! Poor little heiress of Susannah's wealth! How different was his demeanor to this beautiful damsel from his treatment of that little thing! His eyes rested on her face in rapture, his speech failed him now and again as he addressed her, and what he said must be sometimes grave and captivating and sometimes witty, for not she alone but the little maid's governess listened to him eagerly, and when the fair one laughed it was in particularly sweet, clear tones. There was something so lofty in her mien that this frank expression of contentment was almost startling; like a breath of

perfume from some gorgeous flower which seems created to rejoice the eye only. And she, to whom all that Orion had to say was addressed, listened to him not only with deep attention, but in a way which showed the merchant that she cared even more for the speaker than for what he was so eager in expressing. If this maiden wedded the governor's son, they would indeed be a pair! Taus, the innkeeper's wife, now came out, a buxom and vigorous Egyptian woman of middle age, carrying some of the puffs for which she was famous, and which she had just made with her own hands. She also served them with milk, grapes and other fruit, her eyes sparkling with delight and gratified ambition; for the son of the great Mukaukas, the pride of the city, who in former years had often been her visitor, and not only for the sake of her cakes, in water parties with his gay companions — mostly Greek officers who now were all dead and gone or exiles from the country — now did her the honor to come here so soon after his return. Her facile tongue knew no pause as she told him that she and her husband had gone forth with the rest to welcome him at the triumphal arch near Menes' Gate, and Emau with them, and the little one. Yes, Emau was married now, and had called her first child Orion. And when the young man asked Dame Taus whether Emau was as charming as ever and as like her mother as she used to be, she shook her finger at him and asked in her turn, as she pointed towards the young lady, whether the fickle bird at whose departure so many had sighed, was to be caged at last, and whether yon fair lady. . .

But Orion cut her short, saying that he was still his own master though he already felt the noose round his

neck; and the fair lady blushed even more deeply than at the good woman's first question. He however soon got over his awkwardness and gaily declared that the worthy Taus' little daughter was one of the prettiest girls in Memphis, and had had quite as many admirers as her excellent mother's puff-pastry. Taus was to greet her kindly from him.

The landlady departed, much touched and flattered; Orion took up his lute, and while the ladies refreshed themselves he did the maiden's bidding and sang the song by Alcaeus which she asked for, in a rich though subdued voice to the lute, playing it like a master. The young girl's eyes were fixed on his lips, and again, he seemed to be making music for her alone. When it was time to start homewards, and the ladies returned to the barge, he went up to the inn to pay the reckoning. As he presently returned alone the Arab saw him pick up a handkerchief that the young lady had left on the table, and hastily press it to his lips as he went towards the barge.

The gorgeous red blossoms had fared worse in the morning. The young man's heart was given to that maiden on the water. She could not be his sister; what then was the connection between them?

The merchant soon gained this information, for the guide on his return could give it him. She was Paula, the daughter of Thomas, the famous Greek general who had defended the city of Damascus so long and so bravely against the armies of Islam. She was Mukaukas George's niece; but her fortune was small; she was a poor relation of the family, and after her father's disappearance — for his body had never been found — she had been received into the governor's house out of

pity and charity — she, a Melchite! The interpreter had little to say in her favor, by reason of her sect; and though he could find no flaw in her beauty, he insisted on it that she was proud and ungracious, and incapable of winning any man's love; only the child, little Mary — she, to be sure, was very fond of her. It was no secret that even her uncle's wife, worthy Neforis, did not care for her haughty niece and only suffered her to please the invalid. And what business had a Melchite at Memphis, under the roof of a good Jacobite? Every word the dragoman spoke breathed the scorn which a mean and narrow-minded man is always ready to heap on those who share the kindness of his own benefactors.

But this beautiful and lofty-looking daughter of a great man had conquered the merchant's old heart, and his opinion of her was quite unmoved by the Memphite's strictures. It was ere long confirmed indeed, for Philip, the leech whom the guide had been to find, and whose dignified personality inspired the Arab with confidence, was a daily visitor to the governor, and he spoke of Paula as one of the most perfect creatures that Heaven had ever formed in a happy hour. But the Almighty seemed to have forgotten to care for his own masterpiece; for years her life had been indeed a sad one.

The physician could promise the old man some mitigation of his sufferings, and they liked each other so well that they parted the best of friends, and not till a late hour.

CHAPTER III.

THE Mukaukas' barge, urged forward by powerful rowers, made its way smoothly down the river. On board there was whispering, and now and again singing. Little Mary had dropped asleep on Paula's shoulder; the Greek duenna gazed sometimes at the comet which filled her with terrors, sometimes at Orion, whose handsome face had bewitched her mature heart, and sometimes at the young girl whom she was ill-pleased to see thus preferred by this favorite of the gods. It was a deliciously warm, still night, and the moon, which makes the ocean swell and flow, stirs the tide of feeling to rise in the human breast.

Whatever Paula asked for Orion sang, as though nothing was unknown to him that had ever sounded on a Greek lute; and the longer they went on the clearer and richer his voice grew, the more melting and seductive its expression, and the more urgently it appealed to the young girl's heart. Paula gave herself up to the sweet enchantment, and when he laid down the lute and asked in low tones if his native land was not lovely on such a night as this, or which song she liked best, and whether she had any idea of what it had been to him to find her in his parents' house, she yielded to the charm and answered him in whispers like his own.

Under the dense foliage of the sleeping garden he pressed her hand to his lips, and she, tremulous, let him have his way. — Bitter, bitter years lay behind her. The physician had spoken only too truly. The hardest blows of fate had brought her — the proud daughter of

a noble father—to a course of cruel humiliations. The life of a friendless though not penniless relation, taken into a wealthy house out of charity, had proved a thorny path to tread, but now—since the day before yesterday—all was changed. Orion had come. His home and the city had held high festival on his return, as at some gift of Fortune, in which she too had a goodly share. He had met her, not as the dependent relative, but as a beautiful and high-born woman. There was sunshine in his presence which warmed her very heart, and made her raise her head once more like a flower that is brought out under the open sky after long privation of light and air. His bright spirit and gladness of life refreshed her heart and brain; the respect he paid her revived her crushed self-confidence and filled her soul with fervent gratitude. Ah! and how delightful it was to feel that she might be grateful, devotedly grateful. — And then, then this evening had been hers, the sweetest, most blessed that she had known for years. He had reminded her of what she had almost forgotten: that she was still young, that she was still lovely, that she had a right to be happy, to enchant and be enchanted—perhaps even to love and to be loved.

Her hand was still conscious of his burning kiss as she entered the cool room where the Lady Neforis sat awaiting the return of the party, turning her spinning-wheel by the couch of her invalid husband who always went to rest at late hours. It was with an overflowing heart that Paula raised her uncle's hand to her lips—Orion's father, might she not say HER Orion's? — Then she kissed her aunt—his mother, and it was long since she had done so—as she and little Mary

bid her good-night. Neforis accepted the kiss coolly but with some surprise, and looked up enquiringly at the girl and at her son. No doubt she thought many things, but deemed it prudent to give them no utterance for the present. She allowed the girl to retire as though nothing unusual had occurred, superintended the servants who came to carry her husband into his bedroom, gave him the white globule which was to secure him sleep, and with indefatigable patience turned and moved his pillows till his couch was to his mind. Not till then, nor till she was satisfied that a servant was keeping watch in the adjoining room, did she leave him; and then — for there was danger in delay — she went to seek her son.

This tall, large and rather too portly woman had been in her youth a slender and elegant girl; a graceful creature though her calm and expressionless features had never been strikingly beautiful. Age had altered them but little; her face was now that of a good-looking, plump, easy-going matron, which had lost its freshness through long and devoted attendance on the sick man. Her birth and position gave her confidence and self-reliance, but there was nothing gracious or captivating in her individuality. The joys and woes of others were not hers; still she could be moved and stirred by them, even to self-denial, and was very capable of feeling quite a passionate interest for others; only, those others must be her own immediate belongings and no one else. Thus a more devoted and anxious wife, or a more loving mother would have been hard to find; but, if we compare her faculty for loving with a star, its rays were too short to reach further than to those nearest to her, and these regarded

it as an exceptional state of grace to be included within the narrow circle of those beloved by her somewhat grudging soul.

She knocked at Orion's sitting-room, and he hailed her late visit with surprise and pleasure. She had come to speak of a matter of importance, and had done so promptly, for her son's and Paula's conduct just now urged her to lose no time. Something was going on between these two and her husband's niece was far outside the narrow limits of her loving kindness.

This, she began by saying, would not allow her to sleep. She had but one heart's desire and his father shared it: Orion must know full well what she meant; she had spoken to him about it only yesterday. His father had received him with warm affection, had paid his debts unhesitatingly and without a word of reproach, and now it was his part to turn over a new leaf: to break with his former reckless life and set up a home of his own. The bride, as he knew, was chosen for him. "Susannah was here just now," she said. "You scapegrace, she confessed that you had quite turned her Katharina's little head this morning."

"I am sorry for it," he interrupted in a tone of annoyance. "These ways with women have grown upon me as a habit; but I have done with them henceforth. They are unworthy of me now, and I feel, my dear Mother. . . ."

"That life is beginning in earnest," Neforis threw in. "The wish which brings me to you now entirely accords with that. You know what it is, and I cannot imagine what you can have to say against it. In short, you must let me settle the matter to-morrow with Dame

Susannah. You are sure of her daughter's affection, she is the richest heiress in the country, well brought up, and as I said before, she has quite lost her little heart to you."

"And she had better have kept it!" said Orion with a laugh.

Then his mother waxed wroth and exclaimed: "I must beg you to reserve your mirth for a more fitting season and for laughable things. I am very much in earnest when I say: The girl is a sweet, good little creature and will be a faithful and loving wife to you, under God. Or have you left your heart in Constantinople? Has the Senator Justinus' fair relation. — But nonsense! You can hardly suppose that that volatile Greek girl. . ."

Orion clasped her in his arms, and said tenderly: "No, dearest mother, no. Constantinople lies far, far behind me, in grey mist beyond the farthest Thule; and here, close here, under my father's roof, I have found something far more lovely and more perfect than has ever been beheld by the dwellers on the Bosphorus. That little girl is no match for a son of our stalwart and broad-shouldered race. Our future generations must still tower proudly above the common herd in every respect; I want no plaything for a wife, but a woman, such as you yourself were in youth — tall, dignified and handsome. My heart goes forth to no gold-crested wren but to a really royal maiden. — Of what use to waste words! Paula, the noble daughter of a glorious father, is my choice. It came upon me just now like a revelation; I ask your blessing on my union with her!"

So far had Neforis allowed her son to speak. He

had frankly and boldly uttered what she had indeed feared to hear. And so long she had succeeded in keeping silence!—But now her patience gave way. Trembling with anger she abruptly broke in, exclaiming, as her face grew crimson:

“No more, no more! Heaven grant that this which I have been compelled to hear may be no more than a fleeting and foolish whim! Have you quite forgotten who and what we are? Have you forgotten that those were Melchites who slew your two dear brothers—our two noble sons? Of what account are we among the orthodox Greeks? While among the Egyptians and all who confess the saving doctrine of Eutyches, among the Monophysites we are the chief,—and we will remain so, and close our ears and hearts against all heretics and their superstitions. What! A grandson of Menas', the brother of two martyrs for our glorious faith, married to a Melchite! The mere idea is sacrilege, is blasphemy; I can give it no milder name! I and your father will die childless before we consent! And it is for the love of this woman, whose heart is so cold that I shiver only to think of it—for this waif and stray, who has nothing but her ragged pride and the mere scrapings of a lost fortune, which never could compare with ours—for this thankless creature, who can hardly bring herself to bid me, your mother, such a civil good-morning—by Heaven it is the truth—as I can say to a slave—for her that I, that your parents are to be bereft of their son, the only child that a gracious Providence has left to be their joy and comfort? No, no, never! Far be it from me! You, Orion, my heart's darling, you have been a wilful fellow all your life, but you cannot have such a perverse heart as to bring your

old mother, who has kept you in her heart these four and twenty years, in sorrow to the grave and embitter your father's few remaining days—for his hours are numbered!—And all for the sake of this cold beauty, whom you have seen for a few hours these last two days. You cannot have the heart to do this, my heart's treasure, no, you cannot!—But if you should in some accursed hour, I tell you—and I have been a tender mother to you all your life—but as surely as God shall be my stay and your father's in our last hour, I will tear all love for you out of my heart like a poisonous weed—I will, though that heart should break! . . .”

Orion put his arms round the excited woman, who had freed herself from his embrace, laid his hand lightly on her lips and kissed her eyes, whispering in her ear:

“I have not the heart indeed, and could scarcely find it.” Then, taking both her hands, he looked straight into her face.

“Brrr!” he exclaimed, “your daredevil son was never so much frightened in his life as by your threats. What dreadful words are these—and even worse were at the tip of your tongue! Mother—Mother Neforis! Your name means kindness, but you can be cruel, bitterly cruel!”

Still he drew her fondly to him, and kissed her hair and brow and cheeks with eager haste, in a vehemence of feeling which came over him like a revulsion after the shock he had gone through; and when they parted he had given her leave to negotiate for little Katharina's hand on his behalf, and she had promised in return that it should be not on the morrow but the day after at soonest. This delay seemed to him a sort of victory and when he found himself alone and reflected on what

he had done in yielding to his mother, though his heart bled from the wounds of which he himself knew not the depth, he rejoiced that he had not bound Paula by any closer tie. His eyes had indeed told her much, but the word "Love" had not passed his lips — and yet that was what it came to. — But surely a cousin might be allowed to kiss the hand of a lovely relation. She was a desirable woman — ah, how desirable! — and must ever be: but to quarrel with his parents for the sake of a girl, were she Aphrodite herself, or one of the Muses or the Graces — that was impossible! There were thousands of pretty women in the world, but only one mother; and how often had his heart beat high and won another heart, taken all it had to give, and then easily and quickly recovered its balance.

This time however, it seemed more deeply hit than on former occasions; even the lovely Persian slave for whose sake he had committed the wildest follies while yet scarcely more than a school-boy — even the bewitching Heliadora at Constantinople for whom he still had a tender thought, had not agitated him so strongly. It was hard to give up this Paula; but there was no help for it. To-morrow he must do his best to establish their intercourse on a friendly and fraternal footing; for he could have no hope that she would be content to accept his love only, like the gentle Heliadora, who was quite her equal in birth. Life would have been fair, unutterably fair, with this splendid creature by his side! If only he could take her to the Capital he felt sure that all the world would stand still to turn round and gaze at her. And if she loved him — if she met him open-armed . . . Oh, why had spiteful fate made her a Melchite? But then, alas, alas! There must surely be

something wrong with her nature and temper; would she not otherwise have been able in two years to gain the love, instead of the dislike, of his excellent and fond mother? — Well, after all, it was best so; but Paula's image haunted him nevertheless and spoilt his sleep, and his longing for her was not to be stilled.

Neforis, meanwhile, did not return at once to her husband but went to find Paula. This business must be settled on all sides and at once. If she could have believed that her victory would give the invalid unqualified pleasure she would have hastened to him with the good news, for she knew no higher joy than to procure him a moment's happiness; but the Mukaukas had agreed to her choice very reluctantly. Katharina seemed to him too small and childish for his noble son, whose mental superiority had been revealed to him unmistakably and undeniably, in many long discussions since his return, to the delight of his father's heart. "The water-wagtail," though he wished her every happiness, did not satisfy him for Orion. To him, the father, Paula would have been a well-beloved daughter-in-law, and he had often found pleasure in picturing her by Orion's side. But she was a Melchite; he knew too how ill-affected his wife was towards her, so he kept his wish locked in his own breast in order not to vex the faithful companion who lived, thought, and felt for him alone; and Dame Neforis knew or guessed all this, and said to herself that it would cost him his night's rest if he were to be told at once what a concession Orion had made.

With Paula it was different. The sooner she learnt that she had nothing to expect from their son, the better for her.

That very morning she and Orion had greeted each other like a couple of lovers and just now they had parted like a promised bride and bridegroom. She would not again be witness to such vexatious doings; so she went to the young girl's room and confided to her with much satisfaction the happy prospects her son had promised them,—only Paula must say nothing about it till the day after to-morrow.

The moment she entered the room Paula inferred from her beaming expression that she had something to say unpleasant to herself, so she preserved due composure. Her face wore a look of unmoved indifference while she submitted to the overflow of a too-happy mother's heart; and she wished the betrothed couple joy: but she did so with a smile that infuriated Neforis.

She was not on the whole spiteful; but face to face with this girl, her nature was transformed, and she rather liked the idea of showing her, once more in her life, that in her place humility would beseem her. All this she said to herself as she quitted Paula's room; but perhaps this woman, who had much that was good in her, might have felt some ruth, if in the course of the next few hours she could but have looked into the heart of the orphan entrusted to her protection. Only once did Paula sob aloud; then she indignantly dried her tears, and sat for a long time gazing at the floor, shaking her pretty head again and again as though something unheard-of and incredible had befallen her.

At last, with a bitter sigh, she went to bed; and while she vainly strove for sleep, and for strength to pray and be silently resigned, Time seemed to her a wild-beast chase, Fate a relentless hunter, and the quarry he was pursuing was herself.

CHAPTER IV.

On the following evening Haschim, the merchant, came to the governor's house with a small part of his caravan. A stranger might have taken the mansion for the home of a wealthy country-gentleman rather than the official residence of a high official; for at this hour, after sunset, large herds of beasts and sheep were being driven into the vast court-yard behind the house, surrounded on three sides by out-buildings; half a hundred horses of choice breed came, tied in couples, from the watering-place; and in a well-sanded paddock enclosed by hurdles, slaves, brown and black, were bringing fodder to a large troop of camels.

The house itself was well-fitted by its unusually palatial size and antique splendor to be the residence of the emperor's viceroy, and the Mukaukas, to whom it all belonged; had in fact held the office for a long time. After the conquest of the country by the Arabs they had left him in possession, and at the present date he managed the affairs of his Egyptian fellow-countrymen, no more in the name of the emperor at Byzantium, but under the authority of the Khaliff at Medina and his great general, Amrû. The Moslem conquerors had found him a ready and judicious mediator; while his fellow-Christians and country-men obeyed him as being the noblest and wealthiest of their race and the descendant of ancestors who had enjoyed high distinction even under the Pharaohs.

Only the governor's residence was Greek — or rather Alexandrian — in style; the court-yards and out-buildings on the contrary, looked as though they belonged to some Oriental magnate — to some *Erpahā*

(or prince of a province) as the Mukaukas' forefathers had been called, a rank which commanded respect both at court and among the populace.

The dragoman had not told the merchant too much beforehand of the governor's possessions: he had vast estates, in both Upper and Lower Egypt, tilled by thousands of slaves under numerous overseers. Here in Memphis was the centre of administration of his property, and besides the offices for his private affairs were those he needed as a state official.

Well-kept quays, and the wide road running along the harbor side, divided his large domain from the river, and a street ran along the wall which enclosed it on the north. On this side was the great gate, always wide open by day, by which servants or persons on business-errands made their entrance; the other gate, a handsome portal with Corinthian columns opening from the Nile-quay, was that by which the water-party had returned the evening before. This was kept closed, and only opened for the family, or for guests and distinguished visitors. There was a guard-house at the north gate with a small detachment of Egyptian soldiers, who were entrusted with the protection of the Mukaukas' person.

As soon as the refreshing evening breeze came up from the river after the heat of the day there was a stir in the great court-yard. Men, women and girls came trooping out of the retainers' dwellings to breathe the cooler air. Waiting-maids and slaves dipped for water into enormous earthen vessels and carried it away in graceful jars; the free-men of the household rested in groups after the fatigues of the day, chatting, playing and singing. From the slaves' quarters in another

court-yard came confused sounds of singing hymns, with the shrill tones of the double pipe and duller noise of the tabor—an invitation to dance; scolding and laughter; the jubilant shouts of a girl led out to dance, and the shrieks of a victim to the overseer's rod.

The servant's gateway, still hung with flowers and wreaths in honor of Orion's recent return, was wide open for the coming and going of the accountants and scribes, or of such citizens as came very willingly to pay an evening call on their friends in the governor's household; for there were always some officials near the Mukaukas' person who knew more than other folks of the latest events in Church and State.

Ere long a considerable number of men had assembled to sit under the deep wooden porch of the head-steward's dwelling, all taking eager part in the conversation, which they would have found very enjoyable even without the beer which their host offered them in honor of the great event of his young lord's return;—for what was ever dearer to Egyptians than a brisk exchange of talk, at the same time heaping ridicule or scorn on their unapproachable superiors in rank, and on all they deem enemies to their creed or their country.

Many a trenchant word and many a witty jest must have been uttered this evening, for hearty laughter and loud applause were incessant in the head steward's porch; the captain of the guard at the gate cast envious and impatient glances at the merry band, which he would gladly have joined; but he could not yet leave his post. The messengers' horses were standing saddled while their riders awaited their orders, there were supplicants and traders to be admitted or turned away, and there were still a number of persons linger-

ing in the large vestibule of the governor's palace and craving to speak with him, for it was well known in Memphis that during the hot season the ailing Mukaukas granted audience only in the evening.

The Egyptians had not yet acquired full confidence in the Arab government, and every one tried to avoid being handed over to its representative; for none of its officials could be so wise or so just as their old Mukaukas. How the suffering man found strength and time to keep an eye on everything, it was hard to imagine; but the fact remained that he himself looked into every decision. At the same time no one could be sure of his affairs being settled out of hand unless he could get at the governor himself.

Business hours were now over; the anxiety caused both by the delay in the rising of the Nile and by the advent of the comet had filled the waiting-rooms with more petitioners than usual. Deputations from town and village magistrates had been admitted in parties; supplicants on private business had gone in one by one; and most of them had come forth content, or at any rate well advised. Only one man still lingered,—a countryman whose case had long been awaiting settlement—in the hope that a gift to the great man's door-keeper, of a few drachmæ out of his poverty might at length secure him the fruit of his long patience—when the chamberlain, bidding him return on the morrow, officiously flung open the high doors that led to the Mukaukas' apartments, to admit the Arab merchant, in consideration of Haschim's gold piece which had come to him through his cousin the dragoman. Haschim, however, had observed the countryman, and insisted on his being shown in first. This was done, and a few

minutes later the peasant came out satisfied, and gratefully kissed the Arab's hand.

Then the chamberlain led the old merchant, and the men who followed him with a heavy bale, into a magnificent anteroom to wait; and his patience was put to a severe test before his name was called and he could show the governor his merchandise.

The Mukaukas, in fact, after signifying by a speechless nod that he would presently receive the merchant—who came well recommended—had retired to recreate himself, and was now engaged in a game of draughts, heedless of those whom he kept waiting. He reclined on a divan covered with a sleek lioness' skin, while his young antagonist sat opposite on a low stool. The doors of the room, facing the Nile, where he received petitioners were left half open to admit the fresher but still warm evening-air. The green velarium or awning, which during the day had screened off the sun's rays where the middle of the ceiling was open to the sky, was now rolled back; and the moon and stars looked down into the room. It was well adapted to its purpose as a refuge from the heat of the summer day, for the walls were lined with cool, colored earthenware tiles, the floor was a brightly-tinted mosaic of patterns on a ground of gold glass, and in the circular central ornament of this artistic pavement stood the real source of freshness: a basin, two man's length across, of brown porphyry flecked with white, from which a fountain leaped, filling the surrounding air with misty spray. A few stools, couches and small tables, all of cool-looking metal, formed the sole furniture of this lofty apartment which was brilliantly lighted by numerous lamps.

A light air blew in through the open roof and doors, made the lamps flicker, and played with Paula's brown hair as she sat absorbed, as it seemed, in the game. Orion, who stood behind her, had several times endeavored to attract her attention, but in vain. He now eagerly offered his services to fetch her a handkerchief to preserve her from a chill ; this, however, she shortly and decidedly declined, though the breeze came up damp from the river and she had more than once drawn her peplos more closely across her bosom.

The young man set his teeth at this fresh repulse. He did not know that his mother had told Paula what he had yesterday agreed to, and could not account for the girl's altered behavior. All day she had treated him with icy coldness, had scarcely answered his questions with a distant "Yes," or "No ;" and to him, the spoilt favorite of women, this conduct had become more and more intolerable. Yes, his mother had judged her rightly : she allowed herself to be swayed in a most extraordinary manner by her moods ; and now even he was to feel the insolence of her haughtiness, of which he had as yet seen nothing. This repellent coldness bordered on rudeness and he had no mind to submit to it for long. It was with deep vexation that he watched every turn of her hand, every movement of her body, and the varying expression of her face ; and the more the image of this proud maiden sank into his heart the more lovely and perfect he thought her, and the greater grew his desire to see her smile once more, to see her again as sweetly womanly as she had been but yesterday. Now she was like nothing so much as a splendid marble statue, though he knew indeed that it had a soul — and what a glorious task it would be to free this

fair being from herself, as it were, from the foolish tempers that enslaved her, to show her — by severity if need should be—what best beseems a woman, a maiden.

He became more and more exclusively absorbed in watching the young girl, as his mother — who was sitting with Dame Susannah on a couch at some little distance from the players — observed with growing annoyance, and she tried to divert his attention by questions and small errands, so as to give his evident excitement a fresh direction.

Who could have thought, yesterday morning, that her darling would so soon cause her fresh vexation and anxiety.

He had come home just such a man as she and his father could have wished : independent and experienced in the ways of the great world. In the Capital he had, no doubt, enjoyed all that seems pleasant in the eyes of a wealthy youth, but in spite of that he had remained fresh and open-hearted even to the smallest things ; and this was what most rejoiced his father. In him there was no trace of the satiety, the blunted faculty for enjoyment, which fell like a blight on so many men of his age and rank. He could still play as merrily with little Mary, still take as much pleasure in a rare flower or a fine horse, as before his departure. At the same time he had gained keen insight into the political situation of the time, into the state of the empire and the court, into administration, and the innovations in church matters ; it was a joy to his father to hear him discourse ; and he assured his wife that he had learnt a great deal from the boy, that Orion was on the high road to be a great statesman and was already quite capable of taking his father's place.

When Neforis confessed how large a sum in debts Orion had left in Constantinople the old man put his hand in his purse with a sort of pride, delighted to find that his sole remaining heir knew how to spend the immense wealth which to him was now a burden rather than a pleasure—to make good use of it, as he himself had done in his day, and display a magnificence of which the lustre was reflected on him and on his name.

“With him, at any rate,” said the old man, “one gets something for the money. His horses cost a great deal but he knows how to win with them; his entertainments swallow up a pretty sum, but they gain him respect wherever he goes. He brought me a letter from the Senator Justinus, and the worthy man tells me what a leading part he plays among the gilded youth of the Capital. All this is not to be had for nothing, and it will be cheap in the end. What need we care about a hundred talents more or less! And there is something magnanimous in the lad that has given him the spirit to feel that.”

And it was not a hale old grey-beard who spoke thus, but a broken man, whose only joy it was to lavish on his son the riches which he had long been incapable of enjoying. The high-spirited and gifted youth, scarcely more than a boy in years, whom he had sent to the Capital with no small misgivings, must have led a far less lawless life than might have been expected; of this the ruddy tinge in his sunburnt cheeks was ample guarantee, the vigorous solidity of his muscles, and the thick waves of his hair, which was artificially curled and fell in a fringe, as was then the fashion, over his high brow, giving him a certain resemblance to the portraits of Antinous, the handsomest youth in the time

of the Emperor Hadrian. Even his mother owned that he looked like health itself, and no member of the Imperial family could be more richly, carefully and fashionably dressed than her darling. But even in the humblest garb he would have been a handsome—a splendid youth, and his mother's pride! When he left home there was still a smack of the provincial about him; but now every kind of awkwardness had vanished, and wherever he might go—even in the Capital, he was certain to be one of the first to attract observation and approval.

And what had he not known in his city experience? The events of half a century had followed each other with intoxicating rapidity in the course of the thirty months he had spent there. The greater the excitement, the greater the pleasure was the watchword of his time; and though he had rioted and revelled on the shores of the Bosphorus if ever man did, still the pleasures of feasting and of love, or of racing with his own victorious horses—all of which he had enjoyed there to the full—were as child's play compared with the nervous tension to which he had been strung by the appalling events he had witnessed on all sides. How petty was the excitement of an Alexandrian horse-race! Whether Timon or Ptolemy or he himself should win—what did it matter? It was a fine thing no doubt to carry off the crown in the circus at Byzantium, but there were other and soul-stirring crises there beyond those which were bound up with horses or chariots. There a throne was the prize, and might cost the blood

and life of thousands! — What did a man bring home from the churches in the Nile valley? But if he crossed the threshold of St. Sophia's in Constantinople he often might have his blood curdled, or bring home — what matter? — bleeding wounds, or even be carried home — a corpse.

Three times had he seen the throne change masters. An emperor and an empress had been stripped of the purple and mutilated before his eyes.

Aye, then and there he had had real and intense excitement to thrill him to the marrow and quick. As for the rest! Well, yes, he had had more trivial pleasures too. He had not been received as other Egyptians were: half-educated philosophers — who called themselves Sages and assumed a mystic and pompously solemn demeanor, Astrologers, Rhetoricians, poverty-stricken but witty and venomous satirists, physicians making a display of the learning of their forefathers, fanatical theologians — always ready to avail themselves of other weapons than reason and dogma in their bitter contests over articles of faith, hermits and recluses — as foul in mind as they were dirty in their persons, corn-merchants and usurers with whom it was dangerous to conclude a bargain without witnesses. Orion was none of these. As the handsome, genial, and original-minded son of the rich and noble Governor, Mukaukas George, he was welcomed as a sort of ambassador; whatever the golden youth of the city allowed themselves was permitted to him. His purse was as well lined as theirs, his health and vigor far more enduring; and his horses had beaten theirs in three races, though he drove them himself and did not trust them to paid charioteers. The “rich Egyptian,”

the "new Antinous," "handsome Orion," as he was called, could never be spared from feast or entertainment. He was a welcome guest at the first houses in the city, and in the palace and the villa of the Senator Justinus, an old friend of his father, he was as much at home as a son of the house.

It was under his roof, and the auspices of his kind-hearted wife Martina, that he made acquaintance with the fair Heliodora, the widow of a nephew of the Senator; and the whole city had been set talking of the tender intimacy Orion had formed with the beautiful young woman whose rigid virtue had hitherto been a subject of admiration no less than her fair hair and the big jewels with which she loved to set off her simple but costly dress. And many a fair Byzantine had striven for the young Egyptian's good graces before Heliodora had driven them all out of the field. Still, she had not yet succeeded in enslaving Orion deeply and permanently; and when, last evening, he had assured his mother that she was not mistress of his heart he spoke truly.

His conduct in the Capital had not certainly been exemplary, but he had never run wild, and had enjoyed the respect not only of his companions in pleasure, but of grave and venerable men whom he had met in the house of Justinus, and who sang the praises of his intelligence and eagerness to learn. As a boy he had been a diligent scholar, and here he let no opportunity slip. Not least had he cultivated his musical talents in the Imperial city, and had acquired a rare mastery in singing and playing the lute.

He would gladly have remained some time longer at the Capital, but at last the place grew too hot to

hold him — mainly on his father's account. The conviction that George had largely contributed to the disaffection of Egypt for the Byzantine Empire and had played into the hands of the irresistible and detested upstart Arabs, had found increasing acceptance in the highest circles, especially since Cyrus — the deposed and now deceased Patriarch of Alexandria — had retired to Constantinople. Orion's capture was in fact already decided on, when the Senator Justinus and some other friends had hinted a warning which he had acted on just in time.

His father's line of conduct had placed him in great peril; but he owed him no grudge for it — indeed, he most deeply approved of it. A thousand times had he witnessed the contempt heaped on the Egyptians by the Greeks, and the loathing and hatred of the Orthodox for the Monophysite creed of his fellow-countrymen.

He had with difficulty controlled his wrath as he had listened again and again to the abuse and scorn poured out on his country and people by gentle and simple, laymen and priests, even in his presence; regarding him no doubt as one of themselves — a Greek in whose eyes everything "Barbarian" was as odious and as contemptible as in their own.

But the blood of his race flowed in the veins of the "new Antinous" who could sing Greek songs so well and with so pure an accent; every insult to his people was stamped deep in his heart, every sneer at his faith revived his memory of the day when the Melchites had slain his two brothers. And these bloody deeds, these innumerable acts of oppression by which the Greeks had provoked and offended the schismatic Egyptians

and hunted them to death, were now avenged by his father. It lifted up his heart and made him proud to think of it. He showed his secret soul to the old man who was as much surprised as delighted at what he found there; for he had feared that Orion might not be able wholly to escape the powerful influences of Greek beguilements; — nay, he had often felt anxious lest his own son might disapprove of his having surrendered to the Arab conquerors the province entrusted to his rule, and concluded a peace with them.

The Mukaukas now felt himself as one with Orion, and from time to time looked tenderly up at him from the draught-board. Neforis was doing her best to entertain the mother of her son's future bride, and divert her attention from his strange demeanor. She seemed indeed to be successful, for Dame Susannah agreed to everything she said; but she betrayed the fact that she was keeping a sharp watch by suddenly asking: "Does your husband's lofty niece not think us worthy of a single word?"

"Oh no!" said Neforis bitterly. "I only hope she may soon find some other people to whom she can behave more graciously. You may depend upon it I will put no obstacle in her way."

Then she brought the conversation round to Katharina, and the widow told her that her brother-in-law, Chrysippus, was now in Memphis with his two little daughters. They were to go away on the morrow, so the young girl had been obliged to devote herself to them: "And so the poor child is sitting there at this minute," she lamented, "and must keep those two little chatter-boxes quiet while she is longing to be here instead."

Orion quite understood these last words ; he asked after the young girl, and then added gaily :

"She promised me a collar yesterday for my little white keepsake from Constantinople. Fie ! Mary, you should not tease the poor little beast."

"No, let the dog go," added the widow, addressing the governor's little granddaughter, who was trying to make the recalcitrant dog kiss her doll. "But you know, Orion, this tiny creature is really too delicate for such a big man as you are !. You should give him to some pretty young lady and then he would fulfil his destiny ! And Katharina is embroidering him a collar ; I ought not to tell her little secret, but it is to have gold stars on a blue ground."

"Because Orion is a star," cried the little girl. "So she is working nothing but Orions."

"But fortunately there is but one star of my name," observed he. "Pray tell her that Dame Susa."

The child clapped her hands. "He does not choose to have any other star near him !" she exclaimed.

The widow broke in :

"Little simpleton ! I know people who cannot even bear to have a likeness traced between themselves and any one else. — But this you must permit, Orion — you were quite right just now, Neforis ; his mouth and brow might have been taken from his father's face."

The remark was quite accurate ; and yet it would have been hard to imagine two men more unlike than the bright youth full of vitality, and the languid old man on the couch, to whom even the small exertion of moving the men was an effort. The Mukaukas might once have been like his son, but in some long past time. Thin grey locks now only covered one half of his bald

head, and of his eyes, which, thirty years since, had sparkled perhaps as keenly as Orion's, there was usually nothing, or very little to be seen; for the heavy lids always drooped over them as though they had lost the power to open, and this gave his handsome but deathly-pale face a somewhat owl-like look. It was not morose, however; on the contrary the mingled lines of suffering and of benevolent kindness resulted in an expression only of melancholy. The mouth and flabby cheeks were as motionless as though they were dead. Grief, anxiety and alarms seemed to have passed over them with a paralysing hand and had left their trace there. He looked like a man weary unto death, and still living only because fate had denied him the grace to die. Indeed, he had often been taken for dead by his family when he had dipped too freely into a certain little blood-stone box to take too many of the white opium-pills, one of which he placed between his colorless lips at long intervals, even during his game of draughts.

He lifted each piece slowly, like a sleeper with his eyes half shut; and yet his opponent could not hold her own against his wary tactics and was defeated by him now for the third time, though her uncle himself called her a good player. It was easy to read in her high, smooth brow and dark-blue eyes with their direct gaze, that she could think clearly and decisively, and also feel deeply. But she seemed wilful too, and contradictory—at any rate to-day; for when Orion pointed out some move to her she rarely took his advice, but with set lips, pushed the piece according to her own, rarely wiser, judgment. It was quite plain that she was refractory under the guidance of this — especially of this counsellor.

The bystanders could not fail to see the girl's repellent manner and Orion's eager attempts to propitiate her ; and for this reason Neforis was glad when, just as her husband had finished the third game, and had pushed the men together on the board with the back of his hand, his chamberlain reminded him that the Arab was without, awaiting his pleasure with growing impatience. The Mukaukas answered only by a sign, drew his long caftan of the finest wool closer around him, and pointed to the doors and the open roof. The rest of the party had long felt the chill of the damp night air that blew through the room from the river, but knowing that the father suffered more from heat than from anything, they had all willingly endured the draught. Now, however, Orion called the slaves, and before the strangers were admitted the doors were closed and the roof covered.

Paula rose ; the governor lay motionless and kept his eyes apparently closed ; he must, however, have seen what was going forward through an imperceptible slit, for he turned first to Paula and then to the other women saying : " Is it not strange ? — Most old folks, like children, seek the sun, and love to sit, as the others play, in its heat. While I — something that happened to me years ago — you know ; — and it seemed to freeze my blood. Now it never gets warm, and I feel the contrast between the coolness in here and the heat outside most acutely, almost as a pain. The older we grow the more ready we are to abandon to the young the things we ourselves used most to enjoy. The only thing which we old folks do not willingly relinquish is personal comfort, and I thank you for enduring annoyances so patiently for the sake of securing mine. — It

is a terrific summer! You, Paula, from the heights of Lebanon, know what ice is. How often have I wished that I could have a bed of snow. To feel myself one with that fresh, still coldness would be all I wish for! The cold air which you dread does me good. But the warmth of youth rebels against everything that is cool."

This was the first long sentence the Mukaukas had uttered since the beginning of the game. Orion listened respectfully to the end, but then he said with a laugh: "But there are some young people who seem to take pleasure in being cool and icy — for what cause God alone knows!"

As he spoke he looked the girl at whom the words were aimed, full in the face; but she turned silently and proudly away, and an angry shade passed over her lovely features.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN the Arab was at last admitted to the governor's presence his attendants unfolded a hanging before him. The giant Masdakite did the chief share of the work; but as soon as the Mukaukas caught sight of the big man, with his bushy, mane-like hair, and a dagger and a battle-axe stuck through his belt, he cried out:

"Away, away with him! That man — those weapons — I will not look at the hanging till he is gone."

His hands were trembling, and the merchant at once desired his faithful Rustem, the most harmless of

mortals, to quit the room. The governor, whose sensitive nerves had been liable to such attacks of panic ever since an exiled Greek had once attempted to murder him, now soon recovered his composure, and looked with great admiration at the hanging round which the family were standing. They all confessed they had never seen anything like it, and the vivacious Dame Susannah proposed to send for her daughter and her visitors; but it was already late, and her house was so far from the governor's that she gave that up. The father and son had already heard of this marvellous piece of work, which had formed part of the plunder taken by the Arab conquerors of the Persian Empire at the sack of the "White Tower"—the royal palace of Madain, the capital of the Sassanidæ. They knew that it had been originally 300 ells long and 60 ells wide, and had heard with indignation that the Khaliff Omar, who always lived and dressed and ate like the chief of a caravan, and looked down with contempt on all such objects of luxury, had cut this inestimable treasure of art into pieces and divided it among the Companions of the Prophet.

Haschim explained to them that this particular fragment had been the share of the booty allotted to Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. Haschim himself had seen the work before its dismemberment at Madain, where it hung on the wall of the magnificent throne-room, and subsequently, at Medina.

His audience eagerly requested him to describe the other portions; he, however, seemed somewhat uneasy, looking down at his bare feet which were standing on the mosaic pavement, damp from the fountain; for, after the manner of his nation, he had

left his shoes in the outer room. The governor had noticed the old man's gestures as he repeatedly put his hand to his mouth, and while his wife, Orion, and the widow were besieging the merchant with questions, he whispered a few words to one of the slaves. The man vanished, and returned bringing in, by his master's orders, a long strip of carpet which he laid in front of the Arab's brown and strong but delicately-formed feet.

A wonderful change came over the merchant's whole being as this was done. He drew himself up with a dignity which none of those present had suspected in the man who had so humbly entered the room and so diligently praised his wares; an expression of satisfaction overspread his calm, mild features, a sweet smile parted his lips, and his kind eyes sparkled through tears like those of a child unexpectedly pleased. Then he bowed before the Mukaukas, touching his brow, lips and breast with the finger-tips of the right hand to express: "All my thoughts, words and feelings are devoted to you,"—while he said: "Thanks, Son of Menas. That was the act of Moslem."

"Of a Christian!" cried Orion hastily. But his father shook his head gently, and said, slowly and impressively: "Only of a man."

"Of a man," repeated the merchant, and then he added thoughtfully: "Of a man! Yes, that is the highest mark so long as we are what we ought to be: The image of the one God. Who is more compassionate than He? And every mother's son who is likewise compassionate, is like him."

"Another Christian rule, thou strange Moslem!" said Orion interrupting him.

"And yet," said Haschim, with tranquil dignity, "it corresponds word for word with the teaching of the Best of men — our Prophet. I am one of those who knew him here on earth. His brother's smallest pain filled his soft heart with friendly sympathy; his law insists on charity, even towards the shrub by the wayside; he pronounces it mortal sin to injure it, and every Moslem must obey him. Compassion for all is the command of the Prophet. . . ." Here the Arab was suddenly and roughly interrupted; Paula, who, till now, had been leaning against a pilaster, contemplating the hanging and silently listening to the conversation, hastily stepped nearer to the old man, and with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes pointed at him wrathfully, while she exclaimed in a trembling voice — heedless alike of the astonished and indignant bystanders, and of the little dog which flew at the Arab, barking furiously :

"You — you, the followers of the false prophet — you, the companions of the bloodhound Khalid — you and Charity! I know you! I know what you did in Syria. With these eyes have I seen you, and your bloodthirsty women, and the foam on your raging lips. Here I stand to bear witness against you and I cast it in your teeth: You broke faith in Damascus, and the victims of your treachery — defenceless women and tender infants as well as men — you killed with the sword or strangled with your hands. You — you the Apostle of Compassion? — have you ever heard of Abyla? You, the friend of your Prophet — I ask you: what did you, who so tenderly spare the tree by the wayside, do to the innocent folk of Abyla, whom you fell upon like wolves in a sheepfold? You — you and Compassionate!" The vehement girl, to whom no one

had ever shown any pity, and on whose soul the word had fallen like a mockery, who for long hours had been suffering suppressed and torturing misery, felt it a relief to give free vent to the anguish of her soul; she ended with a hard laugh, and waved her hand round her head as though to disperse a swarm of gadflies.

What a woman!

Orion's gaze was fixed on her in horror—but in enchantment. Yes, his mother had judged her rightly. No gentle, tender-hearted woman laughed like that; but she was grand, splendid, wonderful in her wrath. She reminded him of the picture of the goddess of vengeance, by Apelles, which he had seen in Constantinople. His mother shrugged her shoulders and cast a meaning glance at the widow, and even his father was startled at the sight. He knew what had roused her; still he felt that he could not permit this, and he recalled the excited girl to her senses by speaking her name, half-reproachfully and half-regretfully, at first quite gently but then louder and more severely.

She started like a sleep-walker suddenly awaked from her trance, passed her hand over her eyes, and said, as she bowed her head before the governor:

"Forgive me, Uncle, I am sorry for what has occurred—but it was too much for me. You know what my past has been, and when I am reminded—when I must listen to the praises even of the wretches to whom my father and brother. . . ."

A loud sob interrupted her; little Mary was clinging to her and weeping. Orion could hardly keep himself from hastening to her and clasping her in his arms. Ah, how well her woman's weakness became the noble girl! How strongly it drew him to her!

But Paula soon recovered from it; even while the governor was soothing her with kind words she mastered her violent agitation, and said gently, though her tears still quietly flowed: "Let me go to my room, I beg. . . ."

"Good-night, then, child," said the Mukaukas affectionately, and Paula turned towards the door with a silent greeting to the rest of the party; but the Moslem detained her and said:

"I know who you are, noble daughter of Thomas, and I have heard that your brother was the bridegroom who had come to Abyla to solemnize his marriage with the daughter of the prefect of Tripolis. Alas, alas! I myself was there with my merchandise at the fair, when a maddened horde of my fellow-believers fell upon the peaceful town. Poor child, poor child! Your father was the greatest and most redoubtable of our foes. Whether still on earth or in heaven he yet, no doubt honors our sword as we honor his. But your brother, whom we sent to his grave as a bridegroom — he cursed us with his dying breath. You have inherited his rancor; and when it surges up against me, a Moslem, I can do no more than bow my head and do penance for the guilt of those whose blood runs in my veins and whose faith I confess. I have nothing to plead — no, noble maiden, nothing that can excuse the deed of Abyla. There — there alone it was the fate of my grey hairs to be ashamed of my fellow-Moslems — believe me, maiden, it was grievous to me. War, and the memory of many friends slain and of wealth lightly plundered had unchained men's passion; and where passion's pinions wave, whether in the struggle for mine and thine or for other possessions, ever since the

days of Cain and Abel, it is always and everywhere the same."

Paula, who till now had stood motionless in front of the old man, shook her head and said bitterly :

"But all this will not give me back my father and brother. You yourself look like a kind-hearted man ; but for the future — if you are as just as you are kind — find out to whom you are speaking before you talk of the compassion of the Moslems !"

She once more bowed good-night and left the room. Orion followed her ; come what might he must see her. But he returned a few minutes after, breathing hard and with his teeth set. He had taken her hand, had tried to tell her all a loving heart could find to say ; but how sharply, how icily had he been repulsed, with what an air of intolerable scorn had she turned her back upon him ! And now that he was in their midst again he scarcely heard his father express his regrets that so painful a scene should have occurred under his roof, while the Arab said that he could quite understand why the daughter of Thomas should have been betrayed to anger : the massacre of Abyla was quite inexcusable.

"But then," the old man went on, "in what war do not such things take place ? Even the Christian is not always master of himself : you yourself I know, lost two promising sons — and who were the murderers ? Christians — your own fellow-believers. . ."

"The bitterest foes of my beliefs," said the governor slowly, and every syllable was a calm and dignified reproof to the Moslem for supposing that the creed of those who had killed his sons could be his. As he spoke he opened his eyes wide with the look of those

hard, opaquely-glittering stones which his ancestors had been wont to set for eyes in their portrait statues. But he suddenly closed them again and said indifferently : "At what price do you value your hanging? I have a fancy to buy it. Name your lowest terms: I cannot bear to bargain."

"I had thought of asking five hundred thousand drachmae," said the dealer. "Four hundred thousand drachmae, and it is yours."

The governor's wife clasped her hands at such a sum and made warning signals to her husband, shaking her head disapprovingly, when Orion, making a great effort to show that he too took an interest in this important transaction, said: "It may be worth three hundred thousand."

"Four hundred thousand," repeated the merchant coolly. "Your father wished to know the lowest price, and I am asking no more than is right. The rubies and garnets in these grapes, the pearls in the myrtle blossoms, the turquoises in the forget-me-nots, the diamonds hanging as dew on the grass, the emeralds which give brilliancy to the green leaves — this one especially, which is an immense stone — alone are worth more."

"Then why do you not cut them out of the tissue?" asked Neforis.

"Because I cannot bear to destroy this noble work," replied the Arab. "I will sell it as it is or not at all."

At these words the Mukaukas nodded to his son, heedless of the disapprobation his wife persisted in expressing, asked for a tablet which lay near the chess-board, and on it wrote a few words.

"We are agreed," he said to the merchant. "The

treasurer, Nilus, will hand you the payment to-morrow morning on presenting this order."

A fresh emotion now took possession of Orion, and crying: "Splendid! Splendid!" he rushed up to his father and excitedly kissed his hand. Then, turning to his mother, whose eyes were full of tears of vexation, he put his hand under her chin, kissed her brow, and exclaimed with triumphant satisfaction: "This is how we and the emperor do business! — When the father is the most liberal of men the son is apt to look small. Meaning no harm, worthy merchant! As far as the hanging is concerned, it may be more precious than all the treasures of Croesus; but you have something yet to give us into the bargain before you load your camels with our gold: Tell us what the whole work was like before it was divided."

The Moslem, who had placed the precious tablet in his girdle, at once obeyed this request.

"You know how enormous were its length and breadth," he began. "The hall it decorated could hold several thousand guests, besides space for a hundred body guards to stand on each side of the throne. As many weavers, embroiderers and jewellers as there are days in the year worked on it, they say, for the years of a man's life. The woven picture represented paradise as the Persians imagine it—full of green trees, flowers and fruits. Here you can still see a fragment of the sparkling fountain which, when seen from a distance, with its sprinkling of diamonds, sapphires and emeralds, looked like living water. Here the pearls represent the foam on a wave. These leaves, cut across here, belonged to a rose-bush which grew by the fountain of Eden before the evil of the first rain fell on the world.

Originally all roses were white, but as the limbs of the first woman shone with more dazzling whiteness they blushed for shame, and since then there are crimson as well as white roses. So the Persians say."

"And this — our piece?" asked Orion.

"This," replied the merchant, with a pleasant glance at the young man, "was the very middle of the hanging. On the left you see the Judgment at the bridge of Chinât. The damned were not represented, but only the winged, Fravashi, Genii who, as the Persians believe, dwell one with each mortal as his guardian angel through life, united to him but separable. They were depicted in stormy pursuit of the damned — the miscreant followers of Angramainjus, the evil Spirit, of whom you must imagine a vast multitude fleeing before them. The souls in bliss, the pure and faithful servants of the Persian divinity Auramazda, enter with songs of triumph into the flower-decked pleasure-garden, while at their feet the spirits were shown of those who were neither altogether cursed nor altogether blessed, vanishing in humble silence into a dusky grove. The pure enjoyed the gifts of paradise in peace and contentment. — All this was explained to me by a priest of the Fire-worshippers. — Here, you see, is a huge bunch of grapes which one of the happy ones is about to pluck; the hand is uninjured — the arm unfortunately is cut through; but here is a splendid fragment of the wreath of fruit and flowers which framed the whole. That emerald forming a bud — how much do you think it is worth?"

"A magnificent stone!" cried Orion. "Even Heliodora has nothing to equal it. — Well, father, what do you say is its value?"

"Great, very great," replied the Mukaukas. "And yet the whole unmutilated work would be too small an offering for Him to whom I propose to offer it."

"To the great general, Amrû?" asked Orion.

"No child," said the governor decidedly. "To the great, indivisible and divine Person of Jesus Christ and his Church."

Orion looked down greatly disappointed; the idea of seeing this splendid gem hidden away in a reliquary in some dim cupboard did not please him: He could have found a much more gratifying use for it.

Neither his father nor his mother observed his dissatisfaction, for Neforis had rushed up to her husband's couch, and fallen on her knees by his side, covering his cold, slender hand with kisses, as joyful as though this determination had relieved her of a heavy burden of dread: "Our souls, our souls, George! For such a gift — only wait — you will be forgiven all, and recover your lost peace!"

The governor shrugged his shoulders and said nothing; the hanging was rolled up and locked into the *tablinum* by Orion; then the Mukaukas bid the chamberlain show the Arab and his followers to quarters for the night.

CHAPTER VI.

PANGS of soul and doubtings of conscience had, in fact, prompted the governor to purchase the hanging and he therefore might have been glad if it had cost him still dearer. The greater the gift the better founded

his hope of grace and favor from the recipient! And he had grounds for being uneasy and for asking himself whether he had acted rightly. Revenge was no Christian virtue, but to let the evil done to him by the Melchites go unpunished when the opportunity offered for crushing them was more than he could bring himself to. Nay, what father whose two bright young sons had been murdered, but would have done as he did? That fearful blow had struck him in a vital spot. Since that day he had felt himself slowly dying; and that sense of weakness, those desperate tremors, the discomforts and suffering which blighted every hour of his life, were also to be set down to the account of the Melchite tyrants.

His waning powers had indeed only been kept up by his original vigor and his burning thirst for revenge, and fate had allowed him to quench it in a way which, as time went on, seemed too absolute to his peace-loving nature. Though not indeed by his act, still with his complicity he saw the Byzantine Empire bereft of the rich province which Cæsar had entrusted to his rule, saw the Greeks and everything that bore the name of Melchite driven out of Egypt with ignominy — though he would gladly have prevented it — in many places slain like dogs by the furious populace who hailed the Moslems as their deliverers.

Thus all the evil he had invoked on the murderers of his children and the oppressors and torturers of his people had come upon them; his revenge was complete. But, in the midst of his satisfaction at this strange fulfilment of the fervent wish of years, his conscience had lifted up its voice; new, and hitherto unknown terrors had come upon him. He lacked the strength

of mind to be a hero or a reformer. Too great an event had been wrought through his agency, too fearful a doom visited on thousands of men! The Christian Faith—to him the highest consideration—had been too greatly imperilled by his act, for the thought that he had caused all this to be calmly endurable. The responsibility proved too heavy for his shoulders; and whenever he repeated to himself that it was not he who had invited the Arabs into the land, and that he must have been crushed in the attempt to repel them, he could hear voices all round him denouncing him as the man who had surrendered his native land to them, and he fancied himself environed by dangers—believing those who spoke to him of assassins sent forth by the Byzantines to kill him. — But even more appalling, was his dread of the wrath of Heaven against the man who had betrayed a Christian country to the Infidels. Even his consciousness of having been, all his life long, a right-minded, just man could not fortify him against this terror; there was but one thing which could raise his quelled spirit: the white pillules which had long been as indispensable to him as air and water. The kind-hearted old bishop of Memphis, Plotinus, and his clergy had forgiveness for all; the Patriarch Benjamin, on the contrary, had treated him as a reprobate sentenced to eternal damnation, though at the time of this prelate's exile in the desert he had hailed the Arabs as their deliverers from the tyranny of the Melchites, and though George had principally contributed to his recall and reinstatement, and had therefore counted on his support. And, although the Mukaukas could clearly see through the secondary motives which influenced the Patriarch, he nevertheless believed that Benjamin's

office as Shepherd of souls gave him power to close the Gates of Heaven against any sheep in his flock.

The more firmly the Arabs took root in his land, the wiser their rule, and the more numerous the Egyptian converts from the Cross to the Crescent, the greater he deemed his guilt; and when, after the accomplishment of his work of vengeance — his double treason as the Greeks called it — instead of the wrath of God, everything fell to his lot which men call happiness and the favors of fortune, the superstitious man feared lest this was the wages of the Devil, into whose clutches his hasty compact with the Moslems had driven so many Christian souls.

He had unexpectedly fallen heir to two vast estates, and his excavators in the Necropolis had found more gold in the old heathen tombs than all the others put together. The Moslem Khaliff and his viceroy had left him in office and shown him friendship and respect; the *bulaites** of the town had given him the cognomen of "the Just" by acclamation of the whole municipality; his lands had never yielded greater revenues; he received letters from his son's widow in her convent full of happiness over the new and higher aims in life that she had found; his grandchild, her daughter, was a creature whose bright and lovely blossoming was a joy even to strangers; his son's frequent epistles from Constantinople assured him that he was making progress in all respects; and he did not forget his parents; for he was never weary of reporting to them, of his own free impulse, every pleasure he enjoyed and every success he won.

Thus even in a foreign land he had lived with the

* Town councillors.

father and mother who to him were all that was noblest and dearest.

And Paula! Though his wife could not feel warmly towards her the old man regarded her presence in the house as a happy dispensation to which he owed many a pleasant hour, not only over the draughts-board.

All these things might indeed be the wages of Satan; but if indeed it were so, he — George the Mukaukas — would show the Evil One that he was no servant of his, but devoted to the Saviour in whose mercy he trusted. With what fervent gratitude to the Almighty was his soul filled for the return of such a son! Every impulse of his being urged him to give expression to this feeling; his terrors and gratitude alike prompted him to spend so vast a sum in order to dedicate a matchless gift to the Church of Christ. He viewed himself as a prisoner of war whose ransom has just been paid, as he handed to the merchant the tablet with the order for the money; and when he was carried to bed, and his wife was not yet weary of thanking him for his pious intention, he felt happier and more light-hearted than he had done for many years. Generally he could hear Paula walking up and down her room which was over his; for she went late to rest, and in the silence of the night would indulge in sweet and painful memories. How many loved ones a cruel fate had snatched from her! Father, brother, her nearest relations and friends; all at once, by the hand of the Moslems to whom he had abandoned her native land almost without resistance.

"I do not hear Paula to-night," he remarked, glancing up as though he missed something. "The poor child has no doubt gone to bed early after what passed."

"Leave her alone!" said Neforis who did not like to be interrupted in her jubilant effusiveness, and she shrugged her shoulders angrily. "How she behaved herself again! We have heard a great deal too much about charity, and though I do not want to boast of my own I am very ready to exercise it—indeed, it is no more than my duty to show every kindness to a destitute relation of yours. But this girl! She tries me too far, and after all I am no more than human. I can have no pleasure in her presence; if she comes into the room I feel as though misfortune had crossed the threshold. Besides!—You never see such things; but Orion thinks of her a great deal more than is good. I only wish she had been safe out of the house!"

"Neforis!" her husband said in mild reproach; and he would have reproved her more sharply but that since he had become a slave to opium he had lost all power of asserting himself vigorously whether in small matters or great.

Ere long the Mukaukas had fallen into an uneasy sleep; but he opened his eyes more frequently than usual. He missed the light footfall overhead to which he had been accustomed for these two years past; but she who was wont to pace the floor above half the night through had not gone to rest as he supposed. After the events of the evening she had indeed retired to her room with tingling cheeks and burning eyes; but the slave-girls, who paid little attention to a guest who was no more than endured and looked on askance by their mistress, had neglected to open her window-shutters after sundown, as she had requested, and the room was oppressively sultry and airless. The wooden shutters felt hot to the touch, so did the

linen sheets over the wool mattresses. The water in her jug, and even the handkerchief she took up were warm. To an Egyptian all this would have been a matter of course; but the native of Damascus had always passed the summer in her father's country house on the heights of Lebanon, in cool and lucent shade, and the all-pervading heat of the past day had been to her intolerable.

Outside it was pleasant now; so without much reflection she pushed open the shutter, wrapped a long, dark-hued kerchief about her head and stole down the steep steps and out through a little side door into the court-yard.

There she drew a deep breath and spread out her arms longingly, as though she would fain fly far, far from thence; but then she dropped them again and looked about her. It was not the want of fresh air alone that had brought her out; no, what she most craved for was to open her oppressed and rebellious heart to another; and here, in the servants' quarters, there were two souls, one of which knew, understood and loved her, while the other was as devoted to her as a faithful dog, and did errands for her which were to be kept hidden from the governor's house and its inhabitants.

The first was her nurse who had accompanied her to Egypt; the other was a freed slave, her father's head groom, who had escorted the women with his son, a lad, giving them shelter when, after the massacre of Abyla, they had ventured out of their hiding-place, and after lurking for some time in the valley of Lebanon, had found no better issue than to fly to Egypt and put themselves under the protection of the Mukaukas,

whose sister had been Paula's father's first wife. She herself was the child of his second marriage with a Syrian of high rank, a relation of the Emperor Heraclius, who had died, quite young, shortly after Paula's birth.

Both these servants had been parted from her. Perpetua, the nurse, had been found useful by the governor's wife, who soon discovered that she was particularly skilled in weaving and who had made her superintendent of the slave-girls employed at the loom; the old woman had willingly undertaken the duties though she herself was free-born, for her first point in life was to remain near her beloved foster-child. Hiram too, the groom, and his son had found their place among the Mukaukas' household; in the first instance to take charge of the five horses from her father's stable which had brought the fugitives to Egypt, but afterwards — for the governor was not slow to discern his skill in such matters — as a leech for all sorts of beasts, and as an adviser in purchasing horses.

Paula wanted to speak with them both, and she knew exactly where to find them; but she could not get to them without exposing herself to much that was unpleasant, for the governor's free retainers and their friends, not to mention the guard of soldiers who, now that the gates were closed, were still sitting in parties to gossip; they would certainly not break up for some time yet, since the slaves were only now bringing out the soldiers' supper.

The clatter in the court-yard was unceasing, for every one who was free to come out was enjoying the coolness of the night. Among them there were no slaves; these had been sent to their quarters when the

gates were shut ; but even in their dwellings voices were still audible.

With a beating heart Paula tried to see and hear all that came within the ken of her keen eyes and ears. The growing moon lighted up half the enclosure, the rest, so far as the shadow fell, lay in darkness. But in the middle of a large semi-circle of free servants a fire was blazing, throwing a fitful light on their brown faces ; and now and again, as fresh pine-cones were thrown in, it flared up and illuminated even the darker half of the space before her. This added to her trepidation ; she had to cross the court-yard, as she hoped, unseen ; for innocent and natural as her proceedings were, she knew that her uncle's wife would put a wrong construction on her nocturnal expedition.

At first Neforis had begged her husband to assist Paula in her search for her father, of whose death no one had any positive assurance. But his wife's urgency had not been needed : the Mukaukas, of his own free will, had for a whole year done everything in his power to learn the truth as to the lost man's end, from Christian or Moslem, till, many months since, Neforis had declared that any further exertions in the matter were mere folly, and her weak-willed husband had soon been brought to share her views and give up the search for the missing hero. He had secured for Paula, not without some personal sacrifice, much of her father's property, had sold the landed estates to advantage, collected outstanding debts wherever it was still possible, and was anxious to lay before her a statement of what he had recovered for her. But she knew that her interests were safe in his hands and was satisfied to learn that, though she was not rich in the eyes of this

Egyptian Croesus, she was possessed of a considerable fortune. When once and again she had asked for a portion of it to prosecute her search, the Mukaukas at once caused it to be paid to her; but the third time he refused, with the best intentions but quite firmly, to yield to her wishes. He said he was her Kyrios* and natural guardian, and explained that it was his duty to hinder her from dissipating a fortune which she might some day find a boon or indeed indispensable, in pursuit of a phantom — for that was what this search had long since become. The money she had already spent he had replaced out of his own coffers.

This, she felt, was a noble action; still she urged him again and again to grant her wish, but always in vain. He laid his hand with firm determination on the wealth in his charge and would not allow her another *solidus* for the sole and dearest aim of her life.

She seemed to submit; but her purpose of spending her all to recover any trace of her lost parent never wavered in her determined soul. She had sold a string of pearls, and for the price, her faithful Hiram had been able first to make a long journey himself and then to send out a number of messengers into various lands. By this time one at least might very well have reached home with some news, and she must see the freed-man.

But how could she get to him undetected? For some minutes she stood watching and listening for a favorable moment for crossing the court-yard. Suddenly a blaze lighted up a face — it was Hiram's.

At this moment the merry semi-circle laughed loudly

* The woman's legal proxy, who represented her in courts of justice. His presence gave her equal rights with a man in the eyes of the Law.

as with one voice; she hastily made up her mind—drew her kerchief closer over her face, ran quickly along the darker half of the quadrangle and, stooping low, hurried across the moonlight towards the slaves' quarters.

At the entrance she paused; her heart throbbed violently. Had she been observed? No. — There was not a cry, not a following footstep—every dog knew her; the soldiers who were commonly on guard here had quitted their posts and were sitting with their comrades round the fire.

The long building to the left was the weaving shop and her nurse Perpetua lived there, in the upper story. But even here she must be cautious, for the governor's wife often came out to give her orders to the workwomen, and to see and criticise the produce of the hundred looms which were always in motion, early and late. If she should be seen, one of the weavers might only too probably betray the fact of her nocturnal visit. They had not yet gone to rest, for loud laughter fell upon her ear from the large sheds, open on all sides, which stood over the dyers' vats. This class of the governor's people were also enjoying the cool night after the fierce heat of the day, and the girls too had lighted a fire.

Paula must pass them in full moonshine—but not just yet; and she crouched close to the straw thatch which stretched over the huge clay water-jars placed here for the slave-girls to get drink from. It cast a dark triangular shadow on the dusty ground that gleamed in the moonlight, and thus screened her from the gaze of the girls, while she could hear and see what was going on in the sheds.

The dreadful day of torture ending in a harsh dis-

cord was at end; and behind it she looked back on a few blissful hours full of the promise of new happiness; — beyond these lay a long period of humiliation, the sequel of a terrible disaster. How bright and sunny had her childhood been, how delightful her early youth! For long years of her life she had waked every morning to new joys, and gone to rest every evening with sincere and fervent thanksgivings, that had welled from her soul as freely and naturally as perfume from a rose. How often had she shaken her head in perplexed unbelief when she heard life spoken of as a vale of sorrows, and the lot of man bewailed as lamentable. Now she knew better; and in many a lonely hour, in many a sleepless night, she had asked herself whether He could, indeed, be a kind and fatherly-loving God who could let a child be born and grow up, and fill its soul with every hope, and then bereave it of everything that was dear and desirable — even of hope.

But the hapless girl had been piously brought up; she could still believe and pray; and lately it had seemed as though Heaven would grant that for which her tender heart most longed: the love of a beloved and love-worthy man. And now — now?

There she stood with an inconsolable sense of bereavement — empty-hearted; and if she had been miserable before Orion's return, now she was far more so; for whereas she had then been lonely she was now defrauded — she, the daughter of Thomas, the relation and inmate of the wealthiest house in the country; and close to her, from the rough hewn, dirty dyers' sheds such clear and happy laughter rang out from a troop of wretched slave wenches, always liable to the blows of the overseer's rod, that she could not help listening and

turning to look at the girls on whom such an overflow of high spirits and light-heartedness was bestowed.

A large party had collected under the wide palm-thatched roof of the dyeing shed — pretty and ugly, brown and fair, tall and short ; some upright and some bent by toil at the loom from early youth, but all young ; not one more than eighteen years old. Slaves were capital, bearing interest in the form of work and of children. Every slave girl was married to a slave as soon as she was old enough. Girls and married women alike were employed in the weaving shop, but the married ones slept in separate quarters with their husbands and children, while the maids passed the night in large sleeping-barracks adjoining the work-sheds. They were now enjoying the evening respite and had gathered in two groups. One party were watching an Egyptian girl who was scribbling sketches on a tablet ; the others were amusing themselves with a simple game. This consisted in each one in turn flinging her shoe over her head. If it flew beyond a chalk-line to which she turned her back she was destined soon to marry the man she loved ; if it fell between her and the mark she must yet have patience, or would be united to a companion she did not care for.

The girl who was drawing, and round whom at least twenty others were crowded, was a designer of patterns for weaving ; she had too the gift which had characterized her heathen ancestors, of representing faces in profile, with a few simple lines, in such a way that, though often comically distorted, they were easily recognizable. She was executing these works of art on a wax tablet with a copper stylus, and the others were to guess for whom they were meant.

One girl only sat by herself by the furthest post of the shed, and gazed silently into her lap.

Paula looked on and could understand everything that was going forward, though no coherent sentence was uttered and there was nothing to be heard but laughter—loud, hearty, irresistible mirth. When a girl threw the shoe far enough the youthful crowd laughed with all their might, each one shouting the name of some one who was to marry her successful companion; if the shoe fell within the line they laughed even louder than before, and called out the names of all the oldest and dirtiest slaves. A dusky Syrian had failed to hit the mark, but she boldly seized the chalk and drew a fresh line between herself and the shoe so that it lay beyond, at any rate; and their merriment reached a climax when a number of them rushed up to wipe out the new line, a saucy, crisp-haired Nubian tossed the shoe in the air and caught it again, while the rest could not cease for delight in such a good joke and cried every name they could think of as that of the lover for whom their companion had so boldly seized a spoke in Fortune's wheel.

Some spirit of mirth seemed to have taken up his quarters in the draughty shed; the group round the sketcher was not less noisy than the other. If a likeness was recognized they were all triumphant, if not they cried the names of this or that one for whom it might be intended. A storm of applause greeted a successful caricature of the severest of the overseers. All who saw it held their sides for laughing, and great was the uproar when one of the girls snatched away the tablet and the rest fell upon her to scuffle for it.

Paula had watched all this at first with distant

amazement, shaking her head. How could they find so much pleasure in such folly, in such senseless amusements? When she was but a little child even she, of course, could laugh at nothing, and these grown-up girls, in their ignorance and the narrow limitations of their minds, were they not one and all children still? The walls of the governor's house enclosed their world, they never looked beyond the present moment — just like children; and so, like children, they could laugh.

"Fate," thought she, "at this moment indemnifies them for the misfortune of their birth and for a thousand days of misery, and presently they will go tired and happy to bed. I could envy these poor creatures! If it were permissible I would join them and be a child again."

The comic portrait of the overseer was by this time finished, and a short, stout wench burst into a fit of uproarious and unquenchable laughter before any of the rest. It came so naturally, too, from the very depths of her plump little body that Paula, who had certainly not come hither to be gay, suddenly caught the infection and had to laugh whether she would or no. Sorrow and anxiety were suddenly forgotten, thought and calculation were far from her; for some minutes she felt nothing but that she, too, was laughing heartily, irrepressibly, like the young healthful human creature that she was. Ah, how good it was thus to forget herself for once! She did not put this into words, but she felt it, and she laughed afresh when the girl who had been sitting apart joined the others, and exclaimed something which was unintelligible to Paula, but which gave a new impetus to their mirth.

The tall slight form of this maiden was now standing by the fire. Paula had never seen her before and yet she was by far the handsomest of them all ; but she did not look happy and perhaps was in some pain, for she had a handkerchief over her head which was tied at the top over the thick fair hair as though she had the toothache. As she looked at her Paula recovered herself, and as soon as she began to think merriment was at an end. The slave-girls were not of this mind ; but their laughter was less innocent and frank than it had been ; for it had found an object which they would have done better to pass by.

The girl with the handkerchief over her head was a slave too, but she had only lately come into the weaving-sheds after being employed for a long time at needle-work under two old women, widows of slaves. She had been brought as an infant from Persia to Alexandria with her mother, by the troops of Heraclius, after the conquest of Chosroes II.; and they had been bought together for the Mukaukas. When her little one was but thirteen the mother died under the yoke to which she was not born ; the child was a sweet little girl with a skin as white as the swan and thick golden hair, which now shone with strange splendor in the fire-light. Orion had remarked her before his journey, and fascinated by the beauty of the Persian girl, had wished to have her for his own. Servants and officials, in unscrupulous collusion, had managed to transport her to a country-house belonging to the Mukaukas on the other side of the Nile, and there Orion had been able to visit her undisturbed as often as fancy prompted him. The slave-girl, scarcely yet sixteen, ignorant and unprotected, had not dared nor desired to resist her

master's handsome son, and when Orion had set out for Constantinople — heedless and weary already of the girl who had nothing to give him but her beauty — Dame Neforis found out her connection with her son and ordered the head overseer to take care that the unhappy girl should not “ply her seductive arts” any more. The man had carried out her instructions by condemning the fair Persian, according to an ancient custom, to have her ears cut off. After this cruel punishment the mutilated beauty sank into a state of melancholy madness, and although the exorcists of the Church and other thaumaturgists had vainly endeavored to expel the demon of madness, she remained as before: a gentle, good-humored creature, quiet and diligent at her work, under the women who had charge of her, and now in the common work-shop. It was only when she was idle that her craziness became evident, and of this the other girls took advantage for their own amusement.

They now led Mandane to the fire, and with farcical reverence requested her to be seated on her throne — an empty color cask, for she suffered under the strange permanent delusion that she was the wife of the Mukaukas George. They laughingly did her homage, craved some favor or made enquiries as to her husband's health and the state of her affairs. Hitherto a decent instinct of reserve had kept these poor ignorant creatures from mentioning Orion's name in her presence, but now a woolly-headed negress, a lean, spiteful hussy, went up to her, and said with a horrible grimace:

“Oh, mistress, and where is your little son Orion?”
The crazy girl did not seem startled by the question;

she replied very gravely: "I have married him to the emperor's daughter at Constantinople."

"Hey day! A splendid match!" exclaimed the black girl. "Did you know that the young lord was here again? He has brought home his grand wife to you no doubt, and we shall see purple and crowns in these parts!"

These words brought a deep flush into the poor creature's face. She anxiously pressed her hands on the bandage that covered her ears and said: "Really? Has he really come home?"

"Only quite lately," said another and more good-natured girl, to soothe her.

"Do not believe her!" cried the negress. "And if you want to know the latest news of him: Last night he was out boating on the Nile with the tall Syrian. My brother, the boatman, was among the rowers; and he went on finely with the lady I can tell you, finely. . . ."

"My husband, the great Mukaukas?" asked Mandane, trying to collect her ideas.

"No. Your son Orion, who married the emperor's daughter," laughed the negress.

The crazy girl stood up, looked about with a restless glance, and then, as though she had not fully understood what had been said to her, repeated:

"Orion? Handsome Orion?"

"Aye, your sweet son, Orion!" they all shouted, as loud as though she were deaf. Then the usually placable girl, holding her hand over her ear, with the other hit her tormentor such a smack on her thick lips that it resounded, while she shrieked out loud, in shrill tones:

"My son, did you say? My son Orion? — As if

you did not know! Why, he was my lover; yes, he himself said he was, and that was why they came and bound me and cut my ears. — But you know it. But I do not love him — I could, I might wish, I. . . .” She clenched her fists, and gnashed her white teeth, and went on with panting breath:

“Where is he? — You will not tell me? Wait a bit — only wait. Oh, I am sharp enough, I know you have him here. — Where is he? Orion, Orion, where are you?”

She sprang away, ran through the sheds and lifted the lids of all the color-vats, stooping low to look down into each as if she expected to find him there, while the others roared with laughter.

Most of her companions giggled at this witless behavior; but some, who felt it somewhat uncanny and whom the unhappy girl's bitter cry had struck painfully, drew apart and had already organized some new amusement, when a neat little woman appeared on the scene, clapping her plump hands and exclaiming:

“Enough of laughter — now, to bed, you swarm of bees. The night is over too soon in the morning, and the looms must be rattling again by sunrise. One this way and one that, just like mice when the cat appears. Will you make haste, you night-birds? Come, will you make haste?”

The girls had learnt to obey, and they hurried past the matron to their sleeping-quarters. Perpetua, a woman scarcely past fifty, whose face wore a pleasant expression of mingled shrewdness and kindness, stood pricking up her ears and listening; she heard from the water-shed a peculiar low, long-drawn Wheeuh! — a signal with which she was familiar as that by which the

prefect Thomas had been wont to call together his scattered household from the garden of his villa on Mount Lebanon. It was now Paula who gave the whistle to attract her nurse's attention.

Perpetua shook her head anxiously. What could have brought her beloved child to see her at so late an hour? Something serious must have occurred, and with characteristic presence of mind she called out, to show that she had heard Paula's signal: "Now, make haste. Will you be quick? Wheeuh! girls — wheeuh! Hurry, hurry!"

She followed the last of the slave-girls into the sleeping-room, and when she had assured herself that they were all there but the crazy Persian she enquired where she was. They had all seen her a few minutes ago in the shed; so she bid them good-night and left them, letting it be understood that she was about to seek the missing girl.

CHAPTER VII.

PAULA went into her nurse's room, and Perpetua, after a short and vain search for the crazy girl, abandoned her to her fate, not without some small scruples of conscience.

A beautifully-polished copper lamp hung from the ceiling and the little room exactly suited its mistress: both were neat and clean, trim and spruce, simple and yet nice. Snowy transparent curtains enclosed the bed as a protection against the mosquitoes, a crucifix of delicate workmanship hung above the head of the

couch, and the seats were covered with good cloth of various colors, fag-ends from the looms. Pretty straw mats lay on the floor, and pots of plants, filling the little room with fragrance, stood on the window-sill and in a corner of the room where a clay statuette of the Good Shepherd looked down on a praying-desk.

The door had scarcely closed behind them when Perpetua exclaimed: "But child, how you frightened me! At so late an hour!"

"I felt I must come," said Paula. "I could contain myself no longer."

"What, tears?" sighed the woman, and her own bright little eyes twinkled through moisture. "Poor soul, what has happened now?"

She went up to the young girl to stroke her hair, but Paula rushed into her arms, clung passionately round her neck, and burst into loud and bitter weeping. The little matron let her weep for a while; then she released herself, and wiped away her own tears and those of her tall darling, which had fallen on her smooth grey hair. She took Paula's chin in a firm hand and turned her face towards her own, saying tenderly but decidedly: "There, that is enough. You might cry and welcome, for it eases the heart, but that it is so late. Is it the old story: home-sickness, annoyances, and so forth, or is there anything new?"

"Alas, indeed!" replied the girl. She pressed her handkerchief in her hands as she went on with excited vehemence: "I am in the last extremity, I can bear it no longer, I cannot—I cannot! I am no longer a child, and when in the evening you dread the night and in the morning dread the day which must be so wretched, so utterly unendurable. . . ."

"Then you listen to reason, my darling, and say to yourself that of two evils it is wise to choose the lesser. You must hear me say once more what I have so often represented to you before now: If we renounce our city of refuge here and venture out into the wide world again, what shall we find that will be an improvement?"

"Perhaps nothing but a hovel by a well under a couple of palm-trees; that would satisfy me, if I only had you and could be free—free from every one else!"

"What is this; what does this mean?" muttered the elder woman shaking her head. "You were quite content only the day before yesterday. Something must have. . . ."

"Yes, must have happened and has," interrupted the girl almost beside herself. "My uncle's son. — You were there when he arrived — and I thought, even I firmly believed that he was worthy of such a reception. — I — I — pity me, for I. . . You do not know what influence that man exercises over hearts. — And I — I believed his eyes, his words, his songs and — yes, I must confess all — even his kisses on this hand! But it was all false, all a lie, a cruel sport with a weak, simple heart, or even worse — more insulting still! In short, while he was doing all in his power to entrap me — even the slaves in the barge observed it — he was in the very act — I heard it from Dame Neforis, who is only too glad when she can hurt me — in the very act of suing for the hand of that little doll — you know her — little Katharina. She is his betrothed; and yet the shameless wretch dares to carry on his game with me; he has the face. . . ."

Again Paula sobbed aloud; but the older woman did not know how to help in the matter and could only mutter to herself: "Bad, bad—what, this too!—Merciful Heaven! . . ." But she presently recovered herself and said firmly: "This is indeed a new and terrible misfortune; but we have known worse—much, much worse! So hold up your head, and whatever liking you may have in your heart for the traitor, tear it out and trample on it. Your pride will help you; and if you have only just found out what my lord Orion is, you may thank God that things had gone no further between you!"—Then she repeated to Paula all that she knew of Orion's misconduct to the frenzied Mandane, and as Paula gave strong utterance to her indignation, she went on:

"Yes, child, he is a man to break hearts and ruin happiness, and perhaps it was my duty to warn you against him; but as he is not a bad man in other things—he saved the brother of Hathor the designer—you know her—from drowning, at the risk of his own life—and as I hoped you might be on friendly terms with him at least, on his return home, I refrained . . . And besides, old fool that I am, I fancied your proud heart wore a breastplate of mail, and after all it is only a foolish girl's heart like any other, and now in its twenty-first year has given its love to a man for the first time."

But Paula interrupted her: "I love the traitor no more! No, I hate him, hate him beyond words! And the rest of them! I loathe them all!"

"Alas! that it should be so!" sighed the nurse. "Your lot is no doubt a hard one. He—Orion—of course is out of the question; but I often ask myself

whether you might not mend matters with the others. If you had not made it too hard for them, child, they must have loved you; they could not have helped it; but ever since you have been in the house you have only felt miserable and wished that they would let you go your own way, and they — well they have done so; and now you find it ill to bear the lot you chose for yourself. It is so indeed, child, you need not contradict me. This once we will put the matter plainly: Who can hope to win love that gives none, but turns away morosely from his fellow-creatures? If each of us could make his neighbors after his own pattern — then indeed! But life requires us to take them just as we find them, and you, sweetheart, have never let this sink into your mind!"

"Well, I am what I am!"

"No doubt, and among the good you are the best — but which of them all can guess that? Every one to some extent plays a part. And you! What wonder if they never see in you anything but that you are unhappy? God knows it is ten thousand times a pity that you should be! But who can take pleasure in always seeing a gloomy face?"

"I have never uttered a single word of complaint of my troubles to any one of them!" cried Paula, drawing herself up proudly.

"That is just the difficulty," replied Perpetua. "They took you in, and thought it gave them a claim on your person and also on your sorrows. Perhaps they longed to comfort you; for, believe me, child, there is a secret pleasure in doing so. Any one who is able to show us sympathy feels that it does him more good than it does us. I know life! Has it never occurred

to you that you are perhaps depriving your relations in the great house of a pleasure, perhaps even doing them an injury by locking up your heart from them? Your grief is the best side of you, and of that you do indeed allow them to catch a glimpse; but where the pain is you carefully conceal. Every good man longs to heal a wound when he sees it, but your whole demeanor cries out: 'Stay where you are, and leave me in peace.' — If only you were good to your uncle!"

"But I am, and I have felt prompted a hundred times to confide in him — but then. . ."

"Well — then?"

"Only look at him, Betta; see how he lies as cold as marble, rigid and apathetic, half dead and half alive. At first the words often rose to my lips. . ."

"And now?"

"Now all the worst is so long past; I feel I have forfeited the right to complain to him of all that weighs me down."

"Hm," said Perpetua who had no answer ready. "But take heart, my child. Orion has at any rate learnt how far he may venture. You can hold your head high enough and look cool enough. Bear all that cannot be mended, and if an inward voice does not deceive me, he whom we seek. . ."

"That was what brought me here. Are none of our messengers returned yet?"

"Yes, the little Nabathæan is come," replied her nurse with some hesitation, "and he indeed — but for God's sake, child, form no vain hopes! Hiram came to me soon after sun-down. . ."

"Betta!" screamed the girl, clinging to her nurse's arm. "What has he heard, what news does he bring?"

"Nothing, nothing! How you rush at conclusions! What he found out is next to nothing. I had only a minute to speak to Hiram. To-morrow morning he is to bring the man to me. The only thing he told me. . ."

"By Christ's Wounds! What was it?"

"He said that the messenger had heard of an elderly recluse, who had formerly been a great warrior."

"My father, my father!" cried Paula. "Hiram is sitting by the fire with the others. Fetch him here at once—at once; I command you, Perpetua, do you hear? Oh best, dearest Betta! Come with me; we will go to him."

"Patience, sweetheart, a little patience!" urged the nurse. "Ah, poor dear soul, it will turn out to be nothing again; and if we again follow up a false clue it will only lead to fresh disappointment."

"Never mind: you are to come with me."

"To all the servants round the fire, and at this time of night? I should think so indeed!—But do you wait here, child. I know how it can be managed. I will wake Hiram's Joseph. He sleeps in the stable yonder—and then he will fetch his father. Ah! what impatience! What a stormy, passionate little heart it is! If I do not do your bidding, I shall have you awake all night, and wandering about to-morrow as if in a dream.—There, be quiet, be quiet, I am going."

As she spoke she wrapped her kerchief round her head and hurried out; Paula fell on her knees before the crucifix over the bed, and prayed fervently till her nurse returned. Soon after she heard a man's steps on the stairs and Hiram came in.

He was a powerful man of about fifty, with a pair

of honest blue eyes in his plain face. Any one looking at his broad chest would conclude that when he spoke it would be in a deep bass voice; but Hiram had stammered from his infancy; and from constant companionship with horses he had accustomed himself to make a variety of strange, inarticulate noises in a high, shrill voice. Besides, he was always unwilling to speak. When he found himself face to face with the daughter of his master and benefactor, he knelt at her feet, looked up at her with faithful, dog-like eyes full of affection, and kissed first her dress, and then her hand which she held out to him. Paula kindly but decidedly cut short the expressions of delight at seeing her again which he painfully stammered out; and when he at length began to tell his story his words came far too slowly for her impatience.

He told her that the Nabathæan who had brought the rumor that had excited her hopes, was not unwilling to follow up the trace he had found, but he would not wait beyond noon the next day and had tried to bid for high terms.

"He shall have them — as much as he wants!" cried Paula. But Hiram entreated her, more by looks and vague cries than by articulate words, not to hope for too much. Dusare the Nabathæan — Perpetua now took up the tale — had heard of a recluse, living at Raithu on the Red Sea, who had been a great warrior, by birth a Greek, and who for two years had been leading a life of penance in great seclusion among the pious brethren on the sacred Mount of Sinai. The messenger had not been able to learn what his name in the world had been, but among the hermits he was known as Paulus."

"Paulus!" interrupted the girl with panting breath. "A name that must remind him of my mother and of me, yes, of me! And he, the hero of Damascus, who was called Thomas in the world, believing that I was dead, has no doubt dedicated himself to the service of God and of Christ, and has taken the name of Paulus, as Saul, the other man of Damascus did after his conversion,—exactly like him! Oh! Betta, Hiram, you will see: it is he, it must be! How can you doubt it?"

The Syrian shook his head doubtfully and gave vent to a long-drawn whistle, and Perpetua clasped her hands exclaiming distressfully: "Did I not say so? She takes the fire lighted by shepherds at night to warm their hands for the rising sun—the rattle of chariots for the thunders of the Almighty!—Why, how many thousands have called themselves Paulus! By all the Saints, child, I beseech you keep quiet, and do not try to weave a holiday-robe out of airy mist! Be prepared for the worst; then you are armed against failure and preserve your right to hope! Tell her, tell her, Hiram, what else the messenger said; it is nothing positive; everything is as uncertain as dust in the breeze."

The freedman then explained that this Nabathæan was a trustworthy man, far better skilled in such errands than himself, for he understood both Syriac and Egyptian, Greek and Aramaic; and nevertheless he had failed to find out anything more about this hermit Paulus at Tor, where the monks of the monastery of the Transfiguration had a colony. Subsequently, however, on the sea voyage to Holzum, he had been informed by some monks that there was a second Sinai. The

monastery there—but here Perpetua again was the speaker, for the hapless stammerer's brow was beaded with sweat—the monastery at the foot of the peaked, heaven-kissing mountain, had been closed in consequence of the heresies of its inhabitants; but in the gorges of these great heights there were still many recluses, some in a small Coenobium, some in Lauras and separate caves, and among these perchance Paulus might be found. This clue seemed a good one and she and Hiram had already made up their minds to follow it up; but the warrior monk was very possibly a stranger, and they had thought it would be cruel to expose her to so keen a disappointment.

Here Paula interrupted her, crying in joyful excitement:

“And why should not something besides disappointment be my portion for once? How could you have the heart to deprive me of the hope on which my poor heart still feeds?—But I will not be robbed of it. Your Paulus of Sinai is my lost father. I feel it, I know it! If I had not sold my pearls, the Nabathæan. . . . But as it is. When can you start, my good Hiram?”

“Not before a fortnight—at—at—at—soonest,” said the man. “I am in the governor's service now, and the day after to-morrow is the great horse-fair at Niku. The young master wants some stallions bought and there are our foals to. . . .”

“I will implore my uncle to-morrow, to spare you,” cried Paula. “I will go on my knees to him.”

“He will not let him go,” said the nurse. “Sebek the steward told him all about it from me before the hour of audience and tried to have Hiram released.”

“And he said. . . .?”

"The lady Neforis said it was all a mere will-o'-the-wisp, and my lord agreed with her. Then your uncle forbade Sebek to betray the matter to you, and sent word to me that he would possibly send Hiram to Sinai when the horse-fair was over. So take patience, sweetheart. What are two weeks, or at most three — and then. . . ."

"But I shall die before then!" cried Paula. "The Nabathæan, you say, is here and willing to go."

"Yes, Mistress."

"Then we will secure him," said Paula resolutely. Perpetua, however, who must have discussed the matter fully with her fellow-countryman, shook her head mournfully and said: "He asks too much for us!"

She then explained that the man, being such a good linguist, had already been offered an engagement to conduct a caravan to Ctesiphon. This would be a year's pay to him, and he was not inclined to break off his negotiations with the merchant Hanno and search the deserts of Arabia Petræa for less than two thousand drachmae.

"Two thousand drachmae!" echoed Paula, looking down in distress and confusion; but she presently looked up and exclaimed with angry determination: "How dare they keep from me that which is my own? If my uncle refuses what I have to ask, and *will* ask, then the inevitable must happen, though for his sake it will grieve me; I must put my affairs in the hands of the judges."

"The judges?" Perpetua smiled. "But you cannot lay a complaint without your Kyrios, and your uncle is yours. Besides: before they have settled the matter

the messenger may have been to Ctesiphon and back, far as it is."

Again her nurse entreated her to have patience till the horse-fair should be over. Paula fixed her eyes on the ground. She seemed quite crushed; but Perpetua started violently and Hiram drew back a step when she suddenly broke out in a loud, joyful cry of: "Father in Heaven, I have what we need!"

"How, child, what?" asked the nurse, pressing her hand to her heart. But Paula vouchsafed no information; she turned quickly to the Syrian:

"Is the outer court-yard clear yet? Are the people gone?" she asked.

The reply was in the affirmative. The freed servants had retired when Hiram left them. The officials would not break up for some time yet, but there was less difficulty in passing them.

"Very good," said the girl. "Then you, Hiram, lead the way and wait for me by the little side door. I will give you something in my room which will pay the Nabathæan's charges ten times over. Do not look so horrified, Betta. I will give him the large emerald out of my mother's necklace." The woman clasped her hands, and cried out in dismay and warning.

"Child, child! That splendid gem! an heirloom in the family — that stone which came to you from the saintly Emperor Theodosius — to sell that of all things! Nay — to throw it away; not to rescue your father either, but merely — yes child, for that is the truth, merely because you lack patience to wait two little weeks!"

"That is hard, that is unjust, Betta," Paula broke in reprovingly. "It will be a question of a month, and

we all know how much depends on the messenger. Do you forget how highly Hiram spoke of this very man's intelligence? And besides — must I, the younger, remind you? — What is the life of man? An instant may decide his life or death; and my father is an old man, scarred from many wounds even before the siege. It may make just the difference between our meeting, or never meeting again."

"Yes, yes," said the old woman in subdued tones, "perhaps you are right, and if I. . ." But Paula stopped her mouth with a kiss, and then desired Hiram to carry the gem, the first thing in the morning, to Gamaliel the Jew, a wealthy and honest man, and not to sell it for less than twelve thousand drachmae. If the goldsmith could not pay so much for it at once, he might be satisfied to bring away the two thousand drachmae for the messenger, and fetch the remainder at another season.

The Syrian led the way, and when, after a long leave-taking, she quitted her nurse's pleasant little room, Hiram had done her bidding and was waiting for her at the little side door.

CHAPTER VIII.

As Hiram had supposed, the better class of the household were still sitting with their friends, and they had been joined by the guide and by the Arab merchant's head man: Rustem the Masdakite, as well as his secretary and interpreter.

With the exception only of Gamaliel the Jewish

goldsmith, and the Arab's followers, the whole of the party were Christians; and it had gone against the grain to admit the Moslems into their circle — the Jew had for years been a welcome member of the society. However, they had done so, and not without marked civility; for their lord had desired that the strangers should be made welcome, and they might expect to hear much that was new from wanderers from such a distance. In this, to be sure, they were disappointed, for the dragoman was taciturn and the Masdakite could speak no Egyptian, and Greek very ill. So, after various futile attempts to make the new-comers talk, they paid no further heed to them, and Orion's secretary became the chief speaker. He had already told them yesterday much that was fresh and interesting about the Imperial court; to-day he entered into fuller details of the brilliant life his young lord had led at Constantinople, whither he had accompanied him. He described the three races he had won in the Circus with his own horses; gave a lively picture of his forcing his way with only five followers through a raging mob of rioters, from the palace to the church of St. Sophia; and then enlarged on Orion's successes among the beauties of the Capital.

"The queen of them all," he went on in boastful accents, "was Heliodora — no flute-player nor anything of that kind; no indeed, but a rich, elegant, and virtuous patrician lady, the widow of Flavianus, nephew to Justinus the senator, and a relation of the Emperor. All Constantinople was at her feet, the great Gratian himself sought to win her, but of course, in vain. There is no palace to compare with hers in all Egypt, not even in Alexandria. The governor's residence here —

for I think nothing of mere size — is a peasant's hut, a wretched barn by comparison ! I will tell you another time what that casket of treasures is like. Its door was besieged day and night by slaves and freedmen bringing her offerings of flowers and fruit, rare gifts, and tender verses written on perfumed, rose-colored silk ; but her favors were not to be purchased till she met Orion. Would you believe it : from the first time she saw him in Justinus' villa she fell desperately in love with him ; it was all over with her ; she was his as completely as the ring on my finger is mine !”

And in his vanity he showed his hearers a gold ring, with a gem of some value, which he owed to the liberality of his young master. “From that day forth,” he eagerly went on, “the names of Orion and Heliodora were in every mouth, and how often have I seen men quite beside themselves over the beauty of this divine pair. In the Circus, in the theatre, or sailing about the Bosphorus — they were to be seen everywhere together ; and through the hideous, bloody struggle for the throne they lived in a Paradise of their own. He often took her out in his chariot ; or she took him in hers.”

“Such a woman has horses too ?” asked the head groom contemptuously.

“A woman !” cried the secretary. “A lady of rank ! — She has none but bright chestnuts ; large horses of Armenian breed, and small, swift beasts from the island of Sardinia, which fly on with the chariot, four abreast, like hunted foxes. Her horses are always decked with flowers and ribbons fluttering from the gold harness, and the grooms know how to drive them too ! — Well, every one thought that our young lord and the hand-

some widow would marry; and it was a terrible blow to the hapless Heliadora when nothing came of it — she looks like a saint and is as soft as a kitten. I was by when they parted, and she shed such bitter tears it was pitiable to see. Still, she could not be angry with her idol, poor, gentle, tender kitten. She even gave him her lap-dog for a keepsake — that little silky thing you have seen here. And take my word for it, that was a true love-token, for her heart was as much set on that little beast as if it had been her favorite child. And he felt the parting too, felt it deeply; however, I am his confidential secretary, and it would never do for me to tell tales out of school. He clasped the little dog to his heart as he bid her farewell, and he promised her to send some keepsake in return which should show her how precious her love had been — and it will be no trifle, that any one may swear who knows my master. — You, Gamaliel, I daresay he has been to you about it by this time."

The man thus addressed — the same to whom Hiram was to offer Paula's emerald — was a rich Alexandrian of a happy turn of mind; as soon as the incursion of the Saracens had made Alexandria an unsafe residence, so that the majority of his fellow Israelites had fled from the great port, he had found his way to Memphis, where he could count on the protection of his patron, the Mukaukas George.

He shook his grizzled curls at this question, but he presently whispered in the secretary's ear. "We have the very thing he wants. You bring me the cow and you shall have a calf — and a calf with twelve legs too. Is it a bargain?"

"Twelve per cent on the profits? Done!" replied

the secretary in the same tone, with a sly smile of intelligence.

When, by-and-bye, an accountant asked him why Orion had not brought home this fair dame, the bearer too of a noble name, to his parents as their daughter-in-law, he replied that, being a Greek, she was of course a Melchite. Those present asked no better reason; as soon as the question of creed was raised the conversation, as usual in these convivial evenings, became a squabble over dogmatic differences; in the course of it a legal official ventured to opine that if the case had been that of a less personage than a son of the Mukaukas—for whom it was, of course, out of the question—of a mere Jacobite citizen and his Melchite sweetheart, for instance, some compromise might have been effected. They need only have made up their minds each, respectively, to subscribe to the Monothelitic doctrine—though, he, for his part, could have nothing to say to anything of the kind; it was warmly upheld by the Imperial court, and by Cyrus, the deceased patriarch of Alexandria, and was based on the assumption that there were indeed two natures in Christ, but both under the control of one and the same will. By this dogma there were in the Saviour two persons no doubt; still it asserted His unity in a certain qualified sense, and this was the most important point.

Such an heretical proposition was of course loudly disapproved of by the assembled Jacobites; differences of opinion were more and more strongly asserted, and a calm interchange of views turned to a riotous quarrel which threatened to end in actual violence.

This discussion was already beginning when Paula succeeded in slipping unseen across the court-yard.

She silently beckoned to Hiram to follow her; he cautiously took off his shoes, pushed them under the steep servants'-stairs, and in a few minutes was standing in the young girl's room. Paula at once opened a chest, and took out a costly and beautifully-wrought necklace set with pearls. This she handed to the Syrian, desiring him to wrench from its setting a large emerald which hung from the middle. The freedman's strong hand, with the aid of a knife, quickly and easily did the work; and he stood weighing the gem, as it lay freed from the gold hemisphere that had held it, larger than a walnut, shining and sparkling on his palm, while Paula repeated the instructions she had already given him in her nurse's room.

The faithful soul had no sooner left his beloved mistress than she proceeded to unplait her long thick hair, smiling the while with happy hope; but she had not yet begun to undress when she heard a knock. She started, flew to the door and hastily bolted it, while she enquired:

"Who is there?" — preparing herself for the worst.

"Hiram," was the whispered reply. She opened the door, and he told her that meanwhile the side door had been locked, and that he knew no other way out from the great rambling house whither he rarely had occasion to come.

What was to be done? He could not wait till the door was opened again, for he must carry out her commission quite early in the morning, and if he were caught and locked up for only half the day the Nabathæan would take some other engagement.

With swift decision she twisted up her hair, threw a handkerchief over her head, and said: "Then come

with me; the moon is still up; it would not be safe to carry a lamp. I will lead the way and you must keep behind me. If only the kitchen is empty, we can reach the *Viridarium* unseen. If the upper servants are still sitting in the court-yard the great door will be open, for several of them sleep in the house. At any rate you must go through the vestibule; you cannot miss your way out of the *viridarium*. But stay! Beki generally lies in front of the *tablinum* — the fierce dog from Hermonthis in Thebais; and he does not know you, for he never goes out of the house, but he will obey me. When I lift my hand, hang back a little. He is quite quiet with his masters, and does not hurt a stranger if they are by. Now, we must not utter another word. — If we are discovered, I will confess the truth; if you alone are seen, you can say — well, say you were waiting for Orion, to speak to him very early about the horse-fair at Niku."

"A horse was off — off — offered me for sale this very day."

"Good, very good; then you lingered in the vestibule to speak of that — to ask the master about it before he should go out. It must be daylight in a few hours. — Now, come."

Paula went down the stairs with a sure and rapid step. At the bottom Hiram again took off his shoes, holding them in his hand, so as to lose no time in following his mistress. They went on in silence through the darkness till they reached the kitchen. Here Paula turned and said to the Syrian:

"If there is any one here, I will say I came to fetch some water; if there is no one I will cough and you can follow. At any rate I will leave the door

open, and then you will hear what happens. If I am obliged to return, do you hurry on before me back by the way we came. In that case I will return to my room where you must wait outside till the side door is opened again, and if you are found there leave the explanation to me. — Shrink back, quite into that corner."

She softly opened the door into the kitchen; the roof was open to the light of the declining moon and myriad stars. The room was quite empty: only a cat lay on a bench by the wide hearth, and a few bats flitted to and fro on noiseless wings; a few live coals still glowed among the ashes under the spits, like the eyes of lurking beasts of prey. Paula coughed gently, and immediately heard Hiram's step behind her; then, with a beating heart and agonizing fears, she proceeded on her way. First down a few steps, then through a dark passage, where the bats in their unswerving flight shot by close to her head. At last they had to cross the large, open dining-hall. This led into the viridarium, a spacious quadrangle, paved at the edges and planted in the middle, where a fountain played; round this square the Governor's residence was built. All was still and peaceful in this secluded space, vaulted over by the high heavens whose deep blue was thickly dotted with stars. The moon would soon be hidden behind the top of the cornice which crowned the roof of the building. The large-leaved plants in the middle of the quadrangle threw strange, ghostly shadows on the dewy grass-plot; the water in the fountain splashed more loudly than by day, but with a soothing, monotonous gurgle, broken now and then by a sudden short pause. The marble pillars gleamed as white as snow,

and filmy mists, which were beginning to rise from the damp lawn, floated languidly hither and thither on the soft night breeze, like ghosts veiled in flowing crape. Moths flitted noiselessly round and over the clumps of bushes, and the whole quiet and restful enclosure was full of sweetness from the Lotos flowers in the marble basin, from the blossoms of the luxuriant shrubs and the succulent tropical herbs at their feet. At any other time it would have been a joy to pause and look round, only to breathe and let the silent magic of the night exert its spell; but Paula's soul was closed against these charms. The sequestered silence lent a threatening accent to the furious wrangling in the court-yard, which was audible even here in bursts of uproar; and it was with an anxious heart that she observed that everything was not in its usual order; for her sharp eyes could discern no one, nothing, at the entrance to the tablinum, which was usually guarded by an armed sentinel or by the watch-dog; and surely—yes, she was not mistaken—the bronze doors were open, and the moon shone on the bright metal of one half which stood ajar.

She stopped, and Hiram behind her did the same. They both listened with such tension that the veins in their foreheads swelled; but from the tablinum, which was hardly thirty paces from them, came only very faint and intermittent sounds, indistinct in character and drowned by the tumult without.

A few long and anxious minutes, and then the half-closed door was suddenly opened and a man came forth. Paula's heart stood still, but she did not for an instant lose her keenness of vision; she at once and positively recognized the man who came out of the

tablinum as Orion and none other, and the big, long-haired dog too came out and past him, sniffed the air and then, with a loud bark, rushed on the two watchers. Trembling and with clenched teeth, but still mistress of herself, she let him come close to her, and then, calling him by his name: "Beki" in low, caressing tones, as soon as he recognized her, she laid her hand on his shaggy head to scratch his ears, as he loved it done.

Paula and her companion were standing behind a column in the deepest shadow. Thus Orion could not see her, and the dog's loud bark had prevented his hearing her coaxing call; so when Beki was quiet and stood still, Orion whistled to him. The obedient and watchful beast, ran back, wagging his tail; and his master, greeting him as "a stupid old cat-hunter," let him spring over his arm, hugged the creature and then pushed him off again in play. Then he closed the door and went into the apartments leading to the courtyard.

"But he must come back this way to go to his own rooms," said Paula to her companion with a sigh of relief. "We must wait. But now we must not lose a minute. Come over to the door of the tablinum. The dog will know me now and will not bark again."

They hastened on, and when they had reached the door, which lay in shadow within a deep doorway, Paula asked her companion: "Did you see who the man was who came out?"

"My lord Orion," said Hiram. "He was co—co—coming home from the town when I preceded you across the yard."

"Indeed?" she said with apparent indifference, and as she leaned against the cold metal door-panels she

looked back into the garden and thought she was now free to return. She would describe to the freedman the way he must now go—it was quite simple; but she had not had time to do so when, from a room dividing the viridarium from the vestibule she heard first a woman's shrill voice; then the deeper tones of a man; and hardly had they exchanged a few sentences, when every sound was lost in the furious barking of the hound, and immediately after a loud shriek of pain from a woman fell upon her ear, and the noise of a heavy object falling to the ground.

What had happened? It must be something portentous and terrible; of that there could be no doubt; and ere long Paula's fears were justified. Out from the room where the scene had taken place rushed Orion, and with him the dog, across the grass-plot which was usually respected and cherished as holy ground, towards the side of the house facing the river, which was where he and all the family had their rooms.

"Now!" cried Paula, quickly leading the way.

She flew in breathless haste through the first room and into the unguarded hall; but she had not reached the middle of it when she gave a scream, for before her in the moonlight, lay a body, motionless, at full length, on the hard, marble floor.

"Run, Hiram, fly!" she cried to her companion. "The door is ajar—open—I can see it is."

She fell on her knees by the side of the lifeless form, raised the head, and saw—the beautiful, deathlike face of the crazy Persian slave. She felt her hand wet with the blood that had soaked the hapless girl's thick, fair hair, and she shuddered; but she resisted her impulse of horror and loathing, and perceiving some dark stains

on the torn peplos she pulled it aside and saw that the white bosom was bleeding from deep wounds made in the tender flesh by the cruel fangs of the hound.

Paula's heart thrilled with indignation, grief and pity. He—he whom she had only yesterday held to be the epitome of every manly perfection—Orion, was guilty of so foul a deed! He, of whose unflinching, dauntless courage she had heard so much, had fled like a coward, and had left the victim to her fate—twice a victim to him!

But something must be done besides lamenting and raging, and wondering how in one human soul there could be room for so much that was noble and fine with so much that was shameful and cruel. She must save the girl, she must seek help, for Mandane's bosom still faintly rose and fell under Paula's tremulous fingers.

The freedman's brave heart would not allow him to fly to leave her with the injured girl; he flung his shoes on the floor, raised the senseless form, and propped it against one of the columns that stood round the hall. It was not till his mistress had repeated her orders that he hurried away. Paula watched him depart; as soon as she heard the heavy door of the atrium close upon him, heedless of her own suspicious-looking position, she shouted for help, so loudly that her cries rang through the nocturnal silence of the house, and in a few minutes, from this side and that, a slave, a maid, a clerk, a cook, a watchman, came hurrying in.

Foremost of all—so soon indeed that he must have been on his way when he heard her cry—came Orion. He wore a light night-dress, intended, so she said to herself, to give the wretch the appearance of having sprung out of bed. But was this indeed he? Was

this man with a flushed face, staring eyes, disordered hair and hoarse voice, that favorite of fortune whose happy nature, easy demeanor, sunny gaze and enchanting song had bewitched her soul? His hand shook as he came close to her and the injured slave; and how forced and embarrassed was his enquiry as to what had happened; how scared he looked as he asked her what had brought her into this part of the house at such an hour.

She made no reply; but when his mother repeated the question soon after, in a sharp voice, she — she who had never in her life told a lie — said with hasty decision: “I could not sleep, and the bark of the dog and a cry for help brought me here.”

“I call that having sharp ears!” retorted Neforis with an incredulous shrug. “For the future, at any rate, under similar circumstances you need not be so prompt. How long, pray, have young girls trusted themselves alone when murder is cried?”

“If you had but armed yourself, fair daughter of heroes!” added Orion; but he had no sooner spoken than he bitterly regretted it. What a glance Paula cast at him! It was more than she could bear to hear him address her in jest, almost in mockery: him of all men, and at this moment for the first time — and to be thus reminded of her father! She answered proudly and with cutting sharpness: “I leave weapons to fighting men and murderers!”

“To fighting men, and murderers!” repeated Orion, pretending not to understand the point of her words. He forced a smile; but then, feeling that he must make some defence, he added bitterly: “Really, that sounds like the utterance of a feeble-hearted damsel! But let

me beg you to come closer and be calm. These pitiable gashes on the poor creature's shoulder — I care more about her than you do, take my word for it — were inflicted by a four-footed assassin, whose weapons were given by nature. Yes, that is what happened. Rough old Beki keeps watch at the door of the tablinum. What brought the poor child here I know not, but he caught scent of her and pulled her down."

"Or nothing of the kind!" interrupted Neforis, picking up a pair of man's shoes which lay on the ground by the sufferer.

Orion turned as pale as death and hastily took the shoes from his mother's hand; he would have liked to fling them up and away through the open roof. How came they here? Whose were they? Who had been here this night? Before going into the tablinum he had locked the outer door on that side, and had returned subsequently to open it again for the people in the court-yard. It was not till after he had done this that the crazy girl had rushed upon him; she must have been lurking somewhere about when he first went through the atrium but had not then found courage enough to place herself in his way. When she had thrown herself upon him, the dog had pulled her down before he could prevent it: he would certainly have sprung past her and have come to the rescue but that he must thus have betrayed his visit to the tablinum.

It had required all his presence of mind to hurry to his room, fling on his night garments, and rush back to the scene of disaster. When Paula had first called for help he was already on his way, and with what feelings! Never had he felt so bewildered, so confused, so deeply dissatisfied with himself; for the first time in his life, as

he stood face to face with Paula, he dared not look straight into the eyes of his fellow-man.

And now these shoes! The owner must have come there with the crazy girl, and if he had seen him in the tablinum and betrayed what he was doing there, how could he ever again appear in his parents' presence? He had looked upon it as a good joke, but now it had turned to bitter earnest. At any cost he must and would prevent his nocturnal doings from becoming known! Some new wrong-doing — nay, the worst — was preferable to a stain on his honor. — Whose could the shoes be? He suddenly held them up on high, crying with a loud voice: "Do these shoes belong to any of you, you people? To the gate-keeper perhaps?"

When all were silent, and the porter denied the ownership, he stood thinking; then he added with a defiant glare, and in a husky voice: "Then some one who had broken into the house has been startled and dropped them. Our house-stamp is here on the leather: they were made in our work-shop, and they still smell of the stable — here, Sebek, you can convince yourself. Take them into your keeping, man; and to-morrow morning we will see who has left this suspicious offering in our vestibule. — You were the first to reach the spot, fair Paula. Did you see a man about?"

"Yes," she replied with a hostile and challenging stare.

"And which way did he go?"

"He fled across the viridarium like a coward, running across the poor, well-kept grass-plot to save time, and vanished upstairs in the dwelling-rooms."

Orion ground his teeth, and a mad hatred surged

up in him of this mystery in woman's form in whose power, as it seemed, his ruin lay, and whose eyes flashed with revenge and the desire to undo him. What was she plotting against him? Was there a being on earth who would dare to accuse him, the spoilt favorite of great and small. . . . ? And her look had meant more than aversion, it had expressed contempt. . . . How dare she look so at him? Who in the wide world had a right to accuse him of anything that could justify such a feeling? Never, never had he met with enmity like this, least of all from a girl. He longed to annihilate the high-handed, cold-hearted, ungrateful creature who could humble him so outrageously after he had allowed her to see that his heart was hers, and who could make him quail — a man whose courage had been proved a hundred times. He had to exercise his utmost self-control not to forget that she was a woman. — What had happened? What demon had been playing tricks on him? What had so completely altered him within this half-hour that his whole being seemed subverted even to himself, and that any one dared to treat him so?

His mother at once observed the terrible change that came over her son's face when Paula declared that a man had fled towards the dwelling-rooms; but she accounted for it in her own way, and exclaimed in genuine alarm: "Towards the Nile-wing, the rooms where your father sleeps? Merciful Heaven! suppose they have planned an attack there! Run — fly, Sebek. Go across with some armed men! Search the whole house from top to bottom! Perhaps you will catch the rascal — he had trodden down the grass — you must find him — you must not let him escape."

The steward hurried off, but Paula begged the head gardener, who had come in with the rest, to compare the foot-prints of the fugitive, which must yet be visible on the damp grass, with the shoes; her heart beat wildly, and again she tried to catch the young man's eye. Orion, however, started forward and went into the viridarium, saying as he went: "That is my concern."

But he was ashamed of himself, and felt as if something tight was throttling him. In his own eyes he appeared like a thief caught in the act, a traitor, a contemptible rascal; and he began to perceive that he was indeed no longer what he had been before he had committed that fatal deed in the tablinum.

Paula breathed hard as she watched him go out. Had he sunk so low as to falsify the evidence, and to declare that the groom's broad sole fitted the tracks of his small and shapely feet? She hated him, and yet she could have found it in her heart to pray that this, at least, he might not do; and when he came back and said in some confusion that he could not be sure, that the shoes did not seem exactly to fit the foot-marks, she drew a breath of relief and turned again to the wounded girl and the physician, who had now made his appearance. Before Neforis followed her example she drew Orion aside and anxiously asked him what ailed him, he looked so pale and upset. He only said with some hesitation: "That poor girl's fate. . . ." and he pointed to the Persian slave. — "It troubles me."

"You are so soft-hearted — you were as a boy!" said his mother soothingly. She had seen the moisture sparkling in his eyes; but his tears were not for the Persian, but for the mysterious something — he himself

knew not what to call it — that he had forfeited in this last hour, and of which the loss gave him unspeakable pain.

But their dialogue was interrupted : the first misfortune of this luckless night had brought its attendant : the body of Rustem, the splendid and radiantly youthful Rustem, the faithful Persian leader of the caravan, was borne into the hall, senseless. He had made some satirical remark on the quarrel over creeds, and a furious Jacobite had fallen upon him with a log of wood, and dealt him a deep and perhaps mortal wound. The leech at once gave him his care, and several of the crowd of muttering and whispering men, who had made their way in out of curiosity or with a wish to be of use, now hurried hither and thither in obedience to the physician's orders.

As soon as he saw the Masdakite's wound he exclaimed angrily :

"A true Egyptian blow, dealt from behind! — What does this mob want here? Out with every man who does not belong to the place! The first things needed are litters. Will you, Dame Neforis, desire that two rooms may be got ready; one for that poor, gentle creature, and one for this fine fellow, though all will soon be over with him, short of a miracle."

"To the north of the viridarium," replied the lady, "there are two rooms at your service."

"Not there!" cried the leech. "I must have rooms with plenty of fresh air, looking out upon the river."

"There are none but the handsome rooms in the visitor's quarters, where my husband's niece has hers. Sick persons of the family have often lain there, but for such humble folk — you understand?"

"No — I am deaf," replied the physician.

"Oh, I know that," laughed Neforis. "But those rooms are really just refurnished for exalted guests."

"It would be hard to find any more exalted than such as these, sick unto death," replied Philippus. "They are nearer to God in Heaven than you are; to your advantage I believe. Here, you people! Carry these poor souls up to the guests' rooms."

CHAPTER IX.

"It is impossible, impossible, impossible!" cried Orion, jumping up from his writing-table. He thought of what he had done as a misfortune, and not as a crime; he himself hardly knew how it had all come about. Yes, there must be demons, evil, spiteful demons — and it was they who had led him to so mad a deed.

Yesterday evening, after the buying of the hanging, he had yielded to his mother's request that he should escort the widow Susannah home. At her house he had met her husband's brother, a jovial old fellow named Chrysippus; and when the conversation turned on the tapestry, and the Mukaukas' purpose of dedicating this work of art with all the gems worked into it, to the Church, the old man had clasped his hands, fully sharing Orion's disapproval, and had exclaimed laughing: "What, you the son, and is not even a part of the precious stones to fall to your share? Why Katharina? Just a little diamond, a tiny opal might well add to the earthly happiness of the young, though the old must lay

up treasure in heaven. — Do not be a fool! The Church's maw is full enough, and really a mouthful is your due."

And then they drank a good deal of fine wine, till at last the older man had accompanied Orion home, to stretch his limbs in the cool night air. A litter was carried behind him for him to return in, and all the way he had continued to persuade the youth to induce his father not to fling the whole treasure into the jaws of the Church, but to spare him a few stones at least for a more pleasing use. They had laughed over it a good deal, and Orion in his heart had thought Chrysippus very right, and had remembered Heliodora, and her love of large, handsome gems, and the keepsake he owed her. But that neither his father nor his mother would remove a single stone, and that the whole hanging would be dedicated, was beyond a doubt; at the same time, some of this superfluous splendor was in fact his due as their son, and a prettier gift to Heliodora than the large emerald could not be imagined. Yes — and she should have it! How delighted she would be! He even thought of the chief idea for the verses to accompany the gift.

He had the key of the tablinum, in which the work was lying, about his person; and when, on his return, he found the servants still sitting round the fire, he shut the door of the out-buildings while a feeling came over him which he remembered having experienced last on occasions when he and his brothers had robbed a forbidden fruit-tree. He was on the point of giving up his mad project; and when, in the tablinum itself, a horrible inward tremor again came over him he had actually turned to retreat — but he remembered old Chrysippus

and his promptings. To turn and fly now would be cowardice. Heliodora must have the large emerald, and with his verses; his father might give away all the rest as he pleased. When he was kneeling in front of the work with his knife in his hand, that sickening terror had come over him for the third time; if the large emerald had not come off into his hand at the first effort he would certainly have rolled the bale up again and have left the tablinum clean-handed. But the evil demon had been at his elbow, had thrust the gem into his hand, as it were, so that two cuts with the knife had sufficed to displace it from its setting. It rolled into his hand and he felt its noble weight; he cast aside all care, and had thought no more with anything but pleasure of this splendid trick, which he would relate to-morrow to old Chrysippus — of course under seal of secrecy.

But now, in the sober light of day, how different did this mad, rash deed appear; how heavily had he already been punished; what consequences might it not entail? His hatred of Paula grew every minute: she had certainly seen all that had happened and would not hesitate to betray him — that she had shown last night. War, as it were, was declared between them, and he vowed to himself, with fire in his eyes, that he would not shirk it! At the same time he could not deny that she had never looked handsomer than when she stood, with hair half undone, confronting him — threatening him. "It is to be love or hate between us," he muttered to himself. "No half-measures: and she has chosen hate! Good! Hitherto I have only had to fight against men; but this bold, hard, and scornful maiden, who rejects every gentle feeling, is no despicable foe. She has me at bay. If she does her worst by

me I will return it in kind! — And who is the owner of the shoes? I have taken all possible means to find him. Shameful, shameful! that I cannot hold up my head to look boldly at my own face in the glass. Heliodora is a sweet creature, an angel of kindness. She loved me truly; but this — this — Ah, even for her, this is too great a sacrifice!”

He pressed his hand to his brow and flung himself on a divan. He might well be weary, for he had not closed his eyes for more than thirty hours and had already done much business that morning. He had given orders to Sebek the house-steward and to the captain of the Egyptian guard to hunt out the owner of the sandals by the aid of the dogs, and to cast him into prison; next he had of his own accord — since his father generally did not fall asleep till the morning and had not yet left his room — tried to pacify the Arab merchant with regard to the mishap that had befallen his head man under the governor’s roof; but with small success.

Finally the young man had indulged his desire to compose a few lines addressed to the fair Heliodora — for there was no form of physical or mental effort to which he was not trained. He had not lost the idea that had occurred to him yesterday before his theft in the tablinum, and to put it into verse was in his present mood an easy task. He wrote as follows:

“ ‘ Like liketh like ’ saith the saw ; and like to like is but fitting.
Yet, in the hardest of gems thy soft nature rejoices ?—
Nay, but if noble and rare, if its beauty is priceless,
Then, Heliodora, the stone is like thee — akin to thy beauty.
Thus let this emerald please thee ; — and know that the fire
That fills it with light burns more fierce in the heart of thy
Friend.”

He penned the lines rapidly ; and as he did so he felt, he knew not why, an excited thrill, as though every word he threw off was a blow aimed at Paula. Last night he had intended to send the costly jewel to the handsome widow in a suitable setting ; but now it would be madly imprudent to order such a thing. He must send it away at once ; he had hastened to pack it up with the verses, with his own hand, and entrusted it to Chusar, a horse-dealer's groom from Constantinople, who had brought his Pannonian steeds to Memphis. He had himself seen off this trustworthy messenger, who could speak no Egyptian and very little Greek, and when his horse was lost to sight in the dust of the road leading to Alexandria he had returned home in a calmer mood. Ships were constantly putting to sea from that port for Constantinople, and Chusar was enjoined to sail by the first that should be leaving. At least the odious deed should not have been committed in vain ; and yet he would have given a year of his life if now he could but know that it had never been done.

"Impossible !" and "Curse it !" were the words he had most frequently repeated in the course of his retrospect during the past night and morning. How he had had to rush and hurry under the broiling sun ! and the sense of being compelled to do so for mere concealment's sake seemed to him — who had never in his life before done anything that he could not justify in the eyes of honest men — so humiliating, that it brought the sweat to his burning brow. He — Orion — to dread discovery as a thief ! It was inconceivable, and he was afraid, positively afraid for the first time since his boyhood. His fortunate star, which in the Capital had shone on him so brightly and benevolently, seemed to

have proved faithless in this ruinous hole! What had that Persian girl taken into her crazy head that she must rush upon him like some furious beast of prey? He had been bound to her once, no doubt, by a transient passion — and what youth of his age was blind to the charms of a pretty slave-girl? She had been a lovely child, and it was a vexation, nay a grief to him, that she should have been so shamefully punished. If she should recover, and he could have prayed that she might, it would of course be his part to provide for her — of course. To be just, he could not but confess that she indeed had good reason to hate him: but Paula? He had shown her nothing but kindness and yet how unhesitatingly, how openly she had displayed her enmity. He could see her now with the name “murderer” on her quivering lips; the word had stung him like a lance-thrust. What a hideous, degrading and unjust accusation lay in that exclamation! Should he submit to it unrevenged?

Was she as innocent as she was haughty and cold? What was she doing in the viridarium at midnight? — For she must have been there before that ill-starred dog flew at Mandane. An assignation with the owner of the shoes his mother had found was out of the question, for they belonged to some man about the stables. Love, thought he, for a wonder had nothing to do with it; but as he came in he had noticed a man crossing the court-yard who looked like Paula’s freedman, Hiram the trainer. Probably she had arranged a meeting with her stammering friend in order — in order? — Well, there was but one thing that seemed likely: She was plotting to fly from his parents’ house and needed this man’s assistance.

He had seen within a few hours of his return that his mother did not make life sweet to the girl, and yet his father had very possibly opposed her wish to seek another home. But why should she avoid and hate him? In that expedition on the river and on their way home he could have sworn that she loved him, and the remembrance of those hours brought her near to him again, and wiped out his schemes of vengeance against her, of punishment to be visited on her. Then he thought of little Katharina whom his mother intended him to marry, and at the thought he laughed softly to himself. In the Imperial gardens at Constantinople he had once seen a strange Indian bird, with a tiny body and head and an immensely long tail, shining like silver and mother of pearl. This was Katharina! She herself a mere nothing, but then her tail! vast estates and immense sums of money; and this—this was all his mother saw. But did he need more than he had? How rich his father must be to spend so large a sum on an offering to the Church as heedlessly as men give alms to a beggar.

Katharina — and Paula!

Yes, the little girl was a bright, brisk creature; but then Thomas' daughter — what power there was in her eye, what majesty in her gait, how — how — how enchanting her — her voice could be — her voice. . . .

He was asleep, worn out by heat and fatigue; and in a dream he saw Paula lying on a couch strewn with roses while all about her sounded wonderful heart-ensnaring music; and the couch was not solid but blue water, gently moving: he went towards her and suddenly a large black eagle swooped down on him, flapped his wings in his face and when, half-blinded, he

put his hand to his eyes the bird pecked the roses as a hen picks millet and barley. Then he was angry, rushed at the eagle, and tried to clutch him with his hands; but his feet seemed rooted to the ground, and the more he struggled to move freely the more firmly he was dragged backwards. He fought like a madman against the hindering force, and suddenly it released him. He was still under this impression when he woke, streaming with perspiration, and opened his eyes. By his couch stood his mother who had laid her hand on his feet to rouse him.

She looked pale and anxious and begged him to come quickly to his father who was much disturbed, and wished to speak with him. Then she hurried away.

While he hastily arranged his hair and had his shoes clasped he felt vexed that, under the influence of that foolish dream, and still half asleep, he had let his mother go before ascertaining what the circumstances were that had given rise to his father's anxiety. Had it anything to do with the incidents of the past night? No. — If he had been suspected his mother would have told him and warned him. It must refer to something else. Perhaps the old merchant's stalwart headman had died of his wounds, and his father wished to send him — Orion — across the Nile to the Arab vice-roy to obtain forgiveness for the murder of a Moslem, actually within the precincts of the governor's house. This fatal blow might indeed entail serious consequences; however, the matter might very likely be quite other than this.

When he left his room the brooding heat that filled the house struck him as peculiarly oppressive, and a painful feeling, closely resembling shame, stole over

him as he crossed the viridarium, and glanced at the grass from which—thanks to Paula's ill-meant warning—he had carefully brushed away his foot-marks before daybreak. How cowardly, how base, it all was! The best of all in life: honor, self-respect, the proud consciousness of being an honest man—all staked and all lost for nothing at all! He could have slapped his own face or cried aloud like a child that has broken its most treasured toy. But of what use was all this? What was done could not be undone; and now he must keep his wits about him so as to remain, in the eyes of others at least, what he had always been, low as he had fallen in his own.

It was scorchingly hot in the enclosed garden-plot, surrounded by buildings, and open to the sun; not a human creature was in sight; the house seemed dead. The gaudy flag-staffs and trellis-work, and the pillars of the verandah, which had all been newly painted in honor of his return and were still wreathed with garlands, exhaled a smell, to him quite sickening, of melting resin, drying varnish and faded flowers. Though there was no breath of air the atmosphere quivered, as it seemed from the fierce rays of the sun, which were reflected like arrows from everything around him. The butterflies and dragonflies appeared to Orion to move their wings more languidly as they hovered over the plants and flowers, the very fountain danced up more lazily and not so high as usual: everything about him was hot, sweltering, oppressive; and the man who had always been so independent and looked up to, who for years had been free to career through life uncontrolled, and guarded by every good Genius now felt trammelled, hemmed in and harassed.

In his father's cool fountain-room he could breathe more freely ; but only for a moment. The blood faded from his cheeks, and he had to make a strong effort to greet his father calmly and in his usual manner ; for in front of the divan where the governor commonly reclined, lay the Persian hanging, and close by stood his mother and the Arab merchant. Sebek, the steward awaited his master's orders, in the background in the attitude of humility which was torture to his old back, but in which he was never required to remain : Orion now signed to him to stand up

The Arab's mild features wore a look of extreme gravity, and deep vexation could be read in his kindly eyes. As the young man entered he bowed slightly ; they had already met that morning. The Mukaukas, who was lying deathly pale with colorless lips, scarcely opened his eyes at his son's greeting. It might have been thought that a bier was waiting in the next room and that the mourners had assembled here.

The piece of work was only half unrolled, but Orion at once saw the spot whence its crowning glory was now missing — the large emerald which, as he alone could know, was on its way to Constantinople. His theft had been discovered. How fearful, how fatal might the issue be !

"Courage, courage !" he said to himself. "Only preserve your presence of mind. What profit is life with loss of honor ? Keep your eyes open ; everything depends on that, Orion !"

He succeeded in hastily collecting his thoughts, and exclaimed in a voice which lacked little of its usual eager cheerfulness :

"How dismal you all look ! It is indeed a terrible

disaster that the dog should have handled the poor girl so roughly, and that our people should have behaved so outrageously; but, as I told you this morning, worthy Merchant, the guilty parties shall pay for it with their lives. My father, I am sure, will agree that you should deal with them according to your pleasure, and our leech Philippus, in spite of his youth, is a perfect Hippocrates I can assure you! He will patch up the fine fellow — your head-man I mean, and as to any question of compensation, my father — well, you know he is no haggler."

"I beg you not to add insult to the injury that I have suffered under your roof," interrupted Haschim. "No amount of money can buy off my wrath over the spilt blood of a friend — and Rustem was my friend — a free and valiant youth. As to the punishment of the guilty: on that I insist. Blood cries for blood. That is our creed; and though yours, to be sure, enjoins the contrary, so far as I know you act by the same rule as we. — All honor to your physician; but it goes to my heart, and raises my gall to see such things take place in the house of the man to whom the Khaliff has confided the weal or woe of Egyptian Christians. Your boasted tolerance has led to the death of an honest though humble man in a time of perfect peace — or at least maimed him for life. As to your honesty, it would seem. . ."

"Who dares impugn it?" cried Orion.

"I, young man," replied the merchant with the calm dignity of age. "I, who sold this piece of work last evening, and find it this morning robbed of its most precious ornament."

"The great emerald has been cut from the hanging

during the night." Dame Neforis explained. "You yourself went with the man who carried it to the tablinum and saw it laid there."

"And in the very cloth in which your people had wrapped it," added Orion. "Our good old Sebek there was with me. Who fetched away the bale this morning; who brought it here and opened it?"

"Happily for us," said the Arab, "it was your lady mother herself, with that man — your steward if I mistake not — and your own slaves."

"Why was it not left where it was?" asked Orion, giving vent to the annoyance which at this moment he really felt.

"Because I had assured your father, and with good reason, that the beauty of this splendid work and of the gems that decorate it show to much greater advantage by daylight and in the sunshine than under the lamps and torches."

"And besides, your father wished to see his new purchase once more," Neforis broke in, "and to ask the merchant how the gems might be removed without injury to the work itself. So I went to the tablinum myself with Sebek."

"But I had the key!" cried Orion putting his hand into the breast of his robe.

"That I had forgotten," replied his mother. "But unfortunately we did not need it. The tablinum was open."

"I locked it yesterday; you saw me do it, Sebek. . ."

"So I told the mistress," replied the steward. "I perfectly recollect hearing the snap of the strong lock."

Orion shrugged his shoulders, and his mother went on :

“But the bronze doors must have been opened during the night with a false key, or by some other means ; for part of the hanging had been pulled out of the wrapper, and when we looked closely we saw that the large emerald had been wrenched out of the setting.”

“Shameful !” exclaimed Orion.

“Disgraceful !” added the governor, vehemently starting up. He had fallen a prey to fearful unrest and horror : he thought that his Lord and Saviour, to whom he had dedicated the precious jewel, regarded him as so sinful and worthless that He would not accept the gift at his hands. But perhaps it was only Satan striving to hinder him from approaching the Most High with so noble an offering. At any rate, human cunning had been at work, so he said with stern resolution :

“The matter shall be enquired into, and in the name of Jesus Christ, to whom the stone already belongs, I will never rest nor cease till the criminal is in my hands.”

“And in the name of Allah and the Prophet,” added the Arab, “I will aid thee, if I have to appeal for help to the great chief Amrû, the Khaliff’s representative in this country. — A word was spoken here just now that I cannot and will not forget. And the tone you have chosen to adopt, young man, seems to spring from the same fount : the old fox, you think, put a false gem of impossible size into the hanging, and has had it stolen that his fraud may not be detected when a jeweller examines the work by daylight. This is too much ! I am an honest man, Sirs, and I am fain to add a rich one ; and the man who tries to cast a stain

on the character I have borne through a long life shall learn, to his ruing, that old Haschim has greater and more powerful friends to back him than you may care to meet!"

As he uttered this threat the merchant's eyes glistered through tears; it grieved him to be unjustly suspected and to be forced to express himself so hardly to the Mukaukas for whom he felt both reverence and pity. It was clear from the tone of his speech that he was in fact a determined and a powerful personage, and Orion interrupted him with the eager enquiry: "Who has dared to think so basely of you?"

"Your own mother, I regret to say," replied the Moslem sadly, with an oriental shrug of distress and annoyance — his shoulders up to his ears.

"Forget it, I beg of you," said the governor. "God knows women have softer hearts than men, and yet they more readily incline to think evil of their fellow-creatures, and particularly of the enemies of their faith. On the other hand they are more sensitive to kindness. A woman's hair is long and her wits short, says the saw."

"You have plenty to say against us women!" retorted Neforis. "But scold away — scold if it is a comfort to you!" But she added, while she affectionately turned her husband's pillows and gave him another of his white pillules: "I will submit to the worst to-day for I am in the wrong. I have already asked your pardon, worthy Haschim, and I do so again, with all my heart."

As she spoke, she went up to the Arab and held out her hand; he took it, but lightly, however, and quickly released it, saying:

"I do not find it hard to forgive. But I find it im-

possible, here or anywhere, to let so much as a grain of dust rest on my bright good name. I shall follow up this affair, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. — And now, one question : Is the dog that guarded the tablinum a watchful, savage beast ?”

“How savage he is he unfortunately proved on the person of the poor Persian slave ; and his watchfulness is known to all the household,” cried Orion.

“But I would beg you, worthy merchant,” said Neforis, “and in the name of all present, to give us the help of your experience. I myself — wait a little — wait : in spite of her long hair and her short wits a woman often has a happy idea. I, probably, was the first to come on the robber’s track. It is clear that he must belong to the household since the dog did not attack him. Paula, who was so wonderfully quick in coming to the rescue of the Persian, is of course not to be thought of. . .”

Here her husband interrupted her with an angry exclamation : “Leave the girl quite out of the question wife !”

“As if I supposed her to be the thief !” retorted Neforis indignantly, and she shrugged her shoulders as Orion, in mild reproach, also cried : “Mother ! consider. . .” and the merchant asked :

“Do you mean the young girl from whom I had to take such hard words last night ? — Well, then, I will stake my whole fortune on her innocence. That beautiful, passionate creature is incapable of any underhand dealings.”

“Passionate !” Neforis smiled. “Her heart is as cold and as hard as the lost emerald ; we have proved that by experience.”

"Nevertheless," said Orion, "she is incapable of baseness."

"How zealous men can be for a pair of fine eyes!" interrupted his mother. "But I have not the most remote suspicion of her; I have something quite different in my mind. A pair of man's shoes were found lying by the wounded girl. Did you do what my lord Orion ordered, Sebek?"

"At once, Mistress," replied the steward, "and I have been expecting the captain of the watch for some time; for Psamtik. . . ."

But here he was interrupted: the officer in question, who for more than twenty years had commanded the Mukaukas' guard of honor, was shown into the room; after answering a few preliminary enquiries he began his report in a voice so loud that it hurt the governor, and his wife was obliged to request the soldier to speak more gently.

The bloodhounds and terriers had been let out after being allowed to smell at the shoes, and a couple of them had soon found their way to the side-door where Hiram had waited for Paula. There they paused, sniffing about on all sides, and had then jumped up a few steps.

"And those stairs lead to Paula's room," observed Neforis with a shrug.

"But they were on a false scent," the officer eagerly added. "The little toads might have thrown suspicion on an innocent person. The curs immediately after rushed into the stables, and ran up and down like Satan after a lost soul. The pack had soon pulled down the boy—the son of the freedman who came here from Damascus with the daughter of the great Thomas—

and they went quite mad in his father's room : Heaven and earth ! what a howling and barking and yelping. They poked their noses into every old rag, and now we knew where the hole in the wine-skin was. — I am sorry for the man. He stammered horribly, but as a trainer, and in all that has to do with horses, all honor to him ! — The shoes are Hiram's as surely as my eyes are in my head ; but we have not caught him yet. He is across the river, for a boat is missing and where it had been lying the dogs began again. Unless the unbelievers over there give him shelter we are certain to have him."

"Then we know who is the criminal !" cried Orion, with a sigh as deep as though some great burden were lifted from his soul. Then he went on in a commanding tone — and his voice rang so fiercely that the color which had mounted to his cheeks could hardly be due to satisfaction at this last good news. . . .

"As it is not yet two hours after noon, send all your men out to search for him and deliver him up. My father will give you a warrant, and the Arabs on the other shore will assist you. Perhaps the thief may fall into our hands even sooner and with him the emerald, unless the rogue has succeeded in hiding it or selling it." Then his voice sank, and he added in a tone of regret. "It is a pity as concerns the man ; we had not one in our stables who knew more about horses ! Fresh proof of your maxim, mother : if you want to be well served you must buy rascals !"

"Strictly speaking," said Neforis meditatively, "Hiram is not one of our people. He was a freedman of Thomas' and came here with his daughter. Every one speaks highly of his skill in the stable ; but for this rob-

bery we might have kept him for the rest of his life ; still, if the girl had ever taken it into her head to leave us and to take him with her, we could not have detained him. — You may say what you will, and abuse me and mock me ; I have none of what you call imagination ; I see things simply as they are : but there must be some understanding between that girl and the thief."

"You are not to say another word of such monstrous nonsense!" exclaimed her husband ; and he would have said more, but that at that moment the groom of the chambers announced that Gamaliel, the Jewish goldsmith, begged an audience. The man had come to give information with regard to the fate of the lost emerald.

At this statement Orion changed color, and he turned away from the merchant as the slave admitted the same Israelite who had been sitting over the fire with the head-servants. He at once plunged into his story, telling it in his peculiar light-hearted style. He was so rich that the loss he might suffer did not trouble him enough to spoil his good-humor, and so honest that it was a pleasure to him to restore the stolen property to its rightful owner. Early that morning, so he told them, Hiram the groom had been to him to offer him a wonderfully large and splendid emerald for sale. The freedman had assured him that the stone was part of the property left by the famous Thomas, his former master. It had decorated the head-stall of the horse which the hero of Damascus had last ridden, and it had come to him with the steed.

"I offered him what I thought fair," the Jew went on, "and paid him two thousand drachmae on account ;

the remainder he begged me to take charge of for the present. To this I agreed, but ere long a fly began to hum suspicion in my ear. Then the police rushed through the town with the bloodhounds. Good Heavens, what a barking! The creatures yelped as if they would bark my poor house down, like the trumpets round the walls of Jericho — you know. ‘What is the matter now,’ I asked of the dog-keepers, and behold! my suspicions about the emerald were justified; so here, my lord Governor, I have brought you the stone, and as every suckling in Memphis hears from its nurse — unless it is deaf — what a just man Mukaukas George is, you will no doubt make good to me what I advanced to that stammering scoundrel. And you will have the best of the bargain, noble Sir; for I make no demand for interest or even maintenance for the two hours during which it was mine.”

“Give me the stone!” interrupted the Arab, who was annoyed by the Jew’s jesting tone; he snatched the emerald from him, weighed it in his hand, put it close to his eyes, held it far off, tapped it with a small hammer that he took out of his breast-pocket, slipped it into its place in the work, examining it keenly, suspiciously, and at last with satisfaction. During all this, Orion had more than once turned pale, and the sweat broke out on his handsome, pale face. Had a miracle been wrought here? How could this gem, which was surely on its way to Alexandria, have found its way into the Jew’s hands? Or could Chusar have opened the little packet and have sold the emerald to Hiram, and through him to the jeweller? He must get to the bottom of it, and while the Arab was examining the gem he went up to Gamaliel and asked him: “Are you

positively certain—it is a matter of freedom or the dungeon—certain that you had this stone from Hiram the Syrian and from no one else? I mean, is the man so well-known to you that no mistake is possible?"

"God preserve us!" exclaimed the Jew drawing back a step from Orion, who was gazing at him with a sinister light in his eyes. "How can my lord doubt it? Your respected father has known me these thirty years, and do you suppose that I—I do not know the Syrian? Why, who in Memphis can stammer to compare with him? And has he not killed half my children with your wild young horses?—Half killed every one of my children I mean—half killed them, I say, with fright. They are all still alive and well, God preserve them, but none the better for your horse-breaker; for fresh air is good for children and my little Rebecca would stop indoors till he was at home again for fear of his terrifying pranks."

"Well, well!" Orion broke in. "And at what hour did he bring you the emerald for sale? Exactly. Now, recollect: when was it? You surely must remember."

"Adonai! How should I?" said the Jew. "But wait, Sir, perhaps I may be able to tell you. In this hot weather we are up before sunrise; then we said our prayers and had our morning broth; then. . . ."

"Senseless chatter!" urged Orion. But Gamaliel went on without allowing himself to be checked.

"Then little Ruth jumped into my lap to pull out the white hairs that will grow under my nose and, just as the child was doing it and I cried out: 'Oh, you hurt me!' the sun fell upon the earth bank on which I was sitting."

"And at what time does it reach the bank?" cried the young man.

"Exactly two hours after sunrise," replied the Jew, "at this time of year. Do me the honor of a visit to-morrow morning; you will not regret it, for I can show you some beautiful, exquisite things—and you can watch the shadow yourself."

"Two hours after sunrise," murmured Orion to himself, and then with fresh qualms he reflected that it was fully four hours later when he had given the packet to Chusar. It was impossible to doubt the Jew's statement. The man was rich, honest and content: he did not lie. The jewel Orion had sent away and that purchased from Hiram could not in any case be identical. But how could all this be explained? It was enough to turn his brain. And not to dare to speak when mere silence was falsehood—falsehood to his father and mother!—If only the hapless stammerer might escape! If he were caught; then—then merciful Heaven! But no; it was not to be thought of.—On, then, on; and if it came to the worst the honor of a hundred stablemen could not outweigh that of one Orion; horrible as it was, the man must be sacrificed. He would see that his life was spared and that he was soon set at liberty!

The Arab meanwhile had concluded his examination; still he was not perfectly satisfied. Orion longed to interpose; for if the merchant expressed no doubts and acknowledged the recovered gem to be the stolen one, much would be gained; so he turned to him again and said: "May I ask you to show me the emerald once more? It is quite impossible, do you think, that a second should be found to match it?"

"That is too much to assert," said the Arab gravely. "This stone resembles that on the hanging to a hair; and yet it has a little inequality which I do not remember noticing on it. It is true I had never seen it out of the setting, and this little boss may have been turned towards the stuff, and yet, and yet. — Tell me, goldsmith, did the thief give you the emerald bare — unset?"

"As bare as Adam and Eve before they ate the apple," said the Jew.

"That is a pity — a great pity! — And still I fancy that the stone in the work was a trifle longer. In such a case it is almost folly and perversity to doubt, and yet I feel — and yet I ask myself: Is this really the stone that formed that bud?"

"But Heaven bless us!" cried Orion, "the twin of such an unique gem would surely not drop from the skies and at the same moment into one and the same house. Let us be glad that the lost sheep has come back to us. Now, I will lock it into this iron casket, Father, and as soon as the robber is caught you send for me: do you understand, Psamtik?" He nodded to his parents, offered his hand to the Arab, and that in a way which could not fail to satisfy any one, so that even the old man was won over; and then he left the room.

The merchant's honor was saved; still his conscientious soul was disturbed by a doubt that he could not away with. He was about to take leave but the Mukaukas was so buried in pillows, and kept his eyes so closely shut, that no one could detect whether he were sleeping or waking; so the Arab, not wishing to disturb him, withdrew without speaking.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER the great excitement of the night Paula had thrown herself on her bed with throbbing pulses. Sleep would not come to her, and so at rather more than two hours after sunrise she went to the window to close the shutters. As she did so she looked out, and she saw Hiram leap into a boat and push the light bark from the shore. She dared neither signal nor call to him; but when the faithful soul had reached open water he looked back at her window, recognized her in her white morning dress and flourished the oar high in the air. This could only mean that he had fulfilled his commission and sold her jewel. Now he was going to the other side to engage the Nabathæan.

When she had closed the shutters and darkened the room she again lay down. Youth asserted its rights: the weary girl fell into deep, dreamless slumbers.

When she woke, with the heat drops on her forehead, the sun was nearly at the meridian, only an hour till the *Ariston* would be served, the Greek breakfast, the first meal in the morning, which the family eat together as they also did the principal meal later in the day. She had never yet failed to appear, and her absence would excite remark.

The governor's household, like that of every Egyptian of rank, was conducted more on the Greek than the Egyptian plan; and this was the case not merely as regarded the meals but in many other things, and especially the language spoken. From the Mukaukas

himself down to the youngest member of the family, all spoke Greek among themselves, and Coptic, the old native dialect, only to the servants. Nay, many borrowed and foreign words had already crept into use in the Coptic.

The governor's granddaughter, pretty little Mary, had learnt to speak Greek fluently and correctly before she spoke Coptic, but when Paula had first arrived she could not as yet write the beautiful language of Greece with due accuracy. Paula loved children; she longed for some occupation, and she had therefore volunteered to instruct the little girl in the art. At first her hosts had seemed pleased that she should render this service, but ere long the relation between the Lady Neforis and her husband's niece had taken the unpleasant aspect which it was destined to retain. She had put a stop to the lessons, and the reason she had assigned for this insulting step was that Paula had dictated to her pupil long sentences out of her Orthodox Greek prayer-book. This, it was true, she had done; but without the smallest concealment; and the passages she had chosen had contained nothing but what must elevate the soul of every Christian, of whatever confession.

The child had wept bitterly over her grandmother's fiat, though Paula had always taken the lessons quite seriously, for Mary loved her older companion with all the enthusiasm of a half-grown girl — as a child of ten really is in Egypt; her passionate little heart worshipped the beautiful maiden who was in every respect so far above her, and Paula's arms had opened wide to embrace the child who brought sunshine into the gloomy, chill atmosphere she breathed in her uncle's house. But Neforis regarded the child's ardent love for her Mel-

chite relation as exaggerated and morbid, imperilling perhaps her religious faith; and she fancied that under Paula's influence Mary had transferred her affections from her to the younger woman with added warmth. Nor was this idea wholly fanciful; the child's strong sense of justice could not bear to see her friend misunderstood and slighted, often simply and entirely misjudged and hardly blamed, so Mary felt it her duty, as far as in her lay, to make up for her grandmother's delinquencies in regard to the guest who in the child's eyes was perfection.

But Neforis was not the woman to put up with this demeanor in a child. Mary was her granddaughter, the only child of her lost son, and no one should come between them. So she forbid the little girl to go to Paula's room without an express message, and when a Greek teacher was engaged for her, her instructions were that she should keep her pupil as much as possible out of the Syrian damsel's way. All this only fanned the child's vehement affection; and tenderly as her grandmother would sometimes caress her — while Mary on her part never failed in dutiful obedience — neither of them ever felt a true and steady warmth of heart towards the other; and for this Paula was no doubt to blame, though against her will and by her mere existence.

Often, indeed, and by a hundred covert hints Dame Neforis gave Paula to understand that she it was who had alienated her grandchild; there was nothing for it but to keep the child for whom she yearned, at a distance, and only rarely reveal to her the abundance of her love. At last her life was so full of grievance that she was hardly able to be innocent with the innocent — a child with the child; Mary was not slow to note this,

and ascribed Paula's altered manner to the suffering caused by her grandmother's severity.

Mary's most frequent opportunities of speaking to her friend were just before meals; for at that time no one was watching her, and her grandmother had not forbidden her calling Paula to table. A visit to her room was the child's greatest delight — partly because it was forbidden — but no less because Paula, up in her own room, was quite different from what she seemed with the others, and because they could there look at each other and kiss without interference, and say whatever they pleased. There Mary could tell her as much as she dared of the events in their little circle, but the lively and sometimes hoydenish little girl was often withheld from confessing a misdemeanor, or even an inoffensive piece of childishness, by sheer admiration for one who to her appeared nobler, greater and loftier than other beings.

Just as Paula had finished putting up her hair, Mary, who would rush like a whirlwind even into her grandmother's presence, knocked humbly at the door. She did not fly into Paula's arms as she did into those of Susannah or her daughter Katharina, but only kissed her white arm with fervent devotion, and colored with happiness when Paula bent down to her, pressed her lips to her brow and hair, and wiped her wet, glowing cheeks. Then she took Mary's head fondly between her hands and said:

“What is wrong with you, madcap?”

In fact the sweet little face was crimson, and her eyes swelled as if she had been crying violently.

“It is so fearfully hot,” said Mary. “Eudoxia” — her Greek governess — “says that Egypt in summer is

a fiery furnace, a hell upon earth. She is quite ill with the heat, and lies like a fish on the sand; the only good thing about it is. . .”

“That she lets you run off and gives you no lessons?”

Mary nodded, but as no lecture followed the confession she put her head on one side and looked up into Paula's face with large roguish eyes.

“And yet you have been crying! — a great girl like you?”

“I — I crying?”

“Yes, crying. I can see it in your eyes. Now confess: what has happened?”

“You will not scold me?”

“Certainly not.”

“Well then. At first it was fun, such fun you cannot think, and I do not mind the heat; but when the great hunt had gone by I wanted to go to my grandmother and I was not allowed. Do you know, something very particular had been going on in the fountain-room; and as they all came out again I crept behind Orion into the tablinum — there are such wonderful things there, and I wanted just to frighten him a little; we have often played games together before. At first he did not see me, and as he was bending over the hanging, from which the gem was stolen — I believe he was counting the stones in the faded old thing — I just jumped on to his shoulder, and he was so frightened — I can tell you, awfully frightened! And he turned upon me like a fighting-cock and — and he gave me a box on the ear; such a slap, it is burning now — and all sorts of colors danced before my eyes. He always used to be so nice and kind to me, and to you, too, and so I

used to be fond of him — he is my uncle too — but a box on the ears, a slap such as the cook might give to the turnspit — I am too big for that; that I will certainly not put up with! Since my last birthday all the slaves and upper servants, too, have had to treat me as a lady and to bow down to me! And now! — it was just here. — How dare he?” She began to cry again and sobbed out: “But that was not all. He locked me into the dark tablinum and left — left me. . .” her tears flowed faster and faster, “left me sitting there! It was so horrible; and I might have been there now if I had not found a gold plate; I seized my great-grandfather — I mean the silver image of Menas, and hammered on it, and screamed Fire! Then Sebek heard me and fetched Orion, and he let me out, and made such a fuss over me and kissed me. But what is the good of that; my grandfather will be angry, for in my terror I beat his father’s nose quite flat on the plate.

Paula had listened, now amused and now grave, to the little girl’s story; when she ceased, she once more wiped her eyes and said:

“Your uncle is a man, and you must not play with him as if he were a child like yourself. The reminder you got was rather a hard one, no doubt, but Orion tried to make up for it. — But the great hunt, what was that?”

At this question Mary’s eyes suddenly sparkled again. In an instant all her woes were forgotten, even her ancestor’s flattened nose, and with a merry, hearty laugh she exclaimed:

“Oh! you should have seen it! You would have been amused too. They wanted to catch the bad man who cut the emerald out of the hanging. He had left his shoes and they had held them under the dogs’ noses

and then off they went! First they rushed here to the stairs; then to the stables, then to the lodgings of one of the horse-trainers, and I kept close behind, after the terriers and the other dogs. Then they stopped to consider and at last they all ran out at the gate towards the town. I ought not to have gone beyond the court-yard, but — do not be cross with me — it was such fun! — Out they went, along Hapi Street, across the square, and at last into the Goldsmith's Street, and there the whole pack plunged into Gamaliel's shop — the Jew who is always so merry. While he was talking to the others his wife gave me some apricot tartlets; we do not have such good ones at home."

"And did they find the man?" asked Paula, who had changed color repeatedly during the child's story.

"I do not know," said Mary sadly. "They were not chasing any one in particular. The dogs kept their noses to the ground, and we ran after them."

"And only to catch a man, who certainly had nothing whatever to do with the theft. — Reflect a little, Mary. The shoes gave the dogs the scent and they were set on to seize the man who had worn them, but whom no judge had examined. The shoes were found in the hall; perhaps he had dropped them by accident, or some one else may have carried them there. Now think of yourself in the place of an innocent man, a Christian like ourselves, hunted with a pack of dogs like a wild beast. Is it not frightful? No good heart should laugh at such a thing!"

Paula spoke with such impressive gravity and deep sorrow, and her whole manner betrayed such great and genuine distress that the child looked up at her anx-

iously, with tearful eyes, threw herself against her, and hiding her face in Paula's dress exclaimed: "I did not know that they were hunting a poor man, and if it makes you so sad, I wish I had not been there! But is it really and truly so bad? You are so often unhappy when we others laugh!" She gazed into Paula's face with wide, wondering eyes through her tears, and Paula clasped her to her, kissed her fondly, and replied with melancholy sweetness:

"I would gladly be as gay as you, but I have gone through so much to sadden me. Laugh and be merry to your heart's content; I am glad you should. But with regard to the poor hunted man, I fear he is my father's freedman, the most faithful, honest soul! Did your exciting hunt drive any one out of the goldsmith's shop?"

Mary shook her head; then she asked:

"Is it Hiram, the stammerer, the trainer, that they are hunting?"

"I fear it is."

"Yes, yes," said the child. "Stay — oh, dear! it will grieve you again, but I think — I think they said the shoes belonged — but I did not attend. However, they were talking of a groom — a freedman — a stammerer. . . ."

"Then they certainly are hunting down an innocent man," cried Paula with a deep sigh; and she sat down again in front of her toilet-table to finish dressing. Her hands still moved mechanically, but she was lost in thought; she answered the child vaguely, and let her rummage in her open trunk till Mary pulled out the necklace that had been bereft of its gem, and hung it round her neck. Just then there was a knock at the

door and Katharina, the widow Susannah's little daughter, came into the room. The young girl, to whom the governor's wife wished to marry her tall son, scarcely reached to Paula's shoulder, but she was plump and pleasant to look upon; as neat as if she had just been taken out of a box, with a fresh, merry, lovable little face. When she laughed she showed a gleaming row of small teeth, set rather wide apart, but as white as snow; and her bright eyes beamed on the world as gladly as though they had nothing that was not pleasing to look for, innocent mischief to dream of. She too, tried to win Paula's favor; but with none of Mary's devoted and unvarying enthusiasm. Often, to be sure, she would devote herself to Paula with such stormy vehemence that the elder girl was forced to be repellent; then, on the other hand, if she fancied herself slighted, or treated more coolly than Mary, she would turn her back on Paula with sulky jealousy, temper and pouting. It always was in Paula's power to put an end to the "Water-wagtails tantrums" — which generally had their comic side — by a kind word or a kiss; but without some such advances Katharina was quite capable of indulging her humors to the utmost.

On the present occasion she flew into Paula's arms, and when her friend begged, more quietly than usual, that she would allow her first to finish dressing, she turned away without any display of touchiness and took the necklace from Mary's hand to put it on herself. It was of fine workmanship, set with pearls, and took her fancy greatly; only the empty medallion from which Hiram had removed the emerald with his knife spoilt the whole effect. Still, it was a princely jewel, and when she had also taken from the chest a large fan of

ostrich feathers she showed off to her play-fellow, with droll, stiff dignity, how the empress and princesses at Court curtsied and bowed graciously to their inferiors. At this they both laughed a great deal. When Paula had finished her toilet and proceeded to take the necklace off Katharina, the empty setting, which Hiram's knife had bent, caught in the thin tissue of her dress. Mary disengaged it, and Paula tossed the jewel back into the trunk.

While she was locking the box she asked Katharina whether she had met Orion.

"Orion!" repeated the younger girl, in a tone which implied that she alone had the right to enquire about him. "Yes, we came upstairs together; he went to see the wounded man. Have you anything to say to him?"

She crimsoned as she spoke and looked suspiciously at Paula, who simply replied: "Perhaps," and then added, as she hung the ribbon with the key round her neck: "Now, you little girls, it is breakfast time; I am not going down to-day."

"Oh, dear!" cried Mary disappointed, "my grandfather is ailing and grandmother will stay with him; so if you do not come I shall have to sit alone with Eudoxia; for Katharina's chariot is waiting and she must go home at once. Oh! do come. Just to please me; you do not know how odious Eudoxia can be when it is so hot."

"Yes, do go down," urged Katharina. "What will you do up here by yourself? And this evening mother and I will come again."

"Very well," said Paula. "But first I must go to see the invalids."

"May I go with you?" asked the Water wagtail, coaxingly stroking Paula's arm. But Mary clapped her hands, exclaiming:

"She only wants to go to Orion — she is so fond of him. . . ." Katharina put her hand over the child's mouth, but Paula, with quickened breath, explained that she had very serious matters to discuss with Orion; so Katharina, turning her back on her with a hasty gesture of defiance, sulkily went down stairs, while Mary slipped down the bannister rail. Not many days since, Katharina, who was but just sixteen, would gladly have followed her example.

Paula meanwhile knocked at the first of the sick-rooms and entered it as softly as the door was opened by a nursing-sister from the convent of St. Katharine. Orion, whom she was seeking, had been there, but had just left.

In this first room lay the leader of the caravan; in that beyond was the crazy Persian. In a sitting-room adjoining the first room, which, being intended for guests of distinction, was furnished with royal magnificence, sat two men in earnest conversation: the Arab merchant and Philippus the physician, a young man of little more than thirty, tall and bony, in a dress of clean but very coarse stuff without any kind of adornment. He had a shrewd, pale face, out of which a pair of bright black eyes shone benevolently but with keen vivacity. His large cheek-bones were much too prominent; the lower part of his face was small, ugly and, as it were, compressed, while his high broad forehead crowned the whole and stamped it as that of a thinker, as a fine cupola may crown an insignificant and homely structure.

This man, devoid of charm, though his strongly-characterized individuality made it difficult to overlook him even in the midst of a distinguished circle, had been conversing eagerly with the Arab, who, in the course of their two-days' acquaintance, had inspired him with a regard which was fully reciprocated. At last Orion had been the theme of their discourse, and the physician, a restless toiler who could not like any man whose life was one of idle enjoyment, though he did full justice to his brilliant gifts and well-applied studies, had judged him far more hardly than the older man. To the leech all forms of human life were sacred, and in his eyes everything that could injure the body or soul of a man was worthy of destruction. He knew all that Orion had brought upon the hapless Mandane, and how lightly he had trifled with the hearts of other women; in his eyes this made him a mischievous and criminal member of society. He regarded life as an obligation to be discharged by work alone, of whatever kind, if only it were a benefit to society as a whole. And such youths as Orion not only did not recognize this, but used the whole and the parts also for base and selfish ends. The old Moslem, on the contrary, viewed life as a dream whose fairest portion, the time of youth, each one should enjoy with alert senses, and only take care that at the waking which must come with death he might hope to find admission into Paradise. How little could man do against the iron force of fate! That could not be forefended by hard work; there was nothing for it but to take up a right attitude, and to confront and meet it with dignity. The bark of Orion's existence lacked ballast; in fine weather it drifted wherever the breeze carried it. He himself had taken care

to equip it well; and if only the chances of life should freight it heavily — very heavily, and fling it on the rocks, then Orion might show who and what he was; he, Haschim, firmly believed that his character would prove itself admirable. It was in the hour of shipwreck that a man showed his worth.

Here the physician interrupted him to prove that it was not Fate, as imagined by Moslems, but man himself who guided the bark of life — but at this moment Paula looked into the room, and he broke off. The merchant bowed profoundly, Philippus respectfully, but with more embarrassment than might have been expected from the general confidence of his manner. For some years he had been a daily visitor in the governor's house, and after carefully ignoring Paula on her first arrival, since Dame Neforis had taken to treating her so coolly he drew her out whenever he had the opportunity. Her conversations with him had now become dear and even necessary to her, though at first his dry, cutting tone had displeased her, and he had often driven her into a corner in a way that was hard to bear. They kept her mind alert in a circle which never busied itself with anything but the trivial details of family life in the decayed city, or with dogmatic polemics — for the Mukaukas seldom or never took part in the gossip of the women.

The leech never talked of daily events, but expressed his views as to other and graver subjects in life, or in books with which they were both familiar; and he had the art of eliciting replies from her which he met with wit and acumen. By degrees she had become accustomed to his bold mode of thought, sometimes, it is true, too recklessly expressed; and the gifted girl now

preferred a discussion with him to any other form of conversation, recognizing that a childlike and supremely unselfish soul animated this thoughtful reservoir of all knowledge. Almost everything she did displeased her uncle's wife, and so, of course, did her familiar intercourse with this man, whose appearance certainly had in it nothing to attract a young girl. — The physician to a family of rank was there to keep its members in good health, and it was unbecoming in one of them to converse with him on intimate terms as an equal. She reproached Paula — whose pride she was constantly blaming — for her unseemly condescension to Philippus; but what chiefly annoyed her was that Paula took up many a half-hour which otherwise Philippus would have devoted to her husband; and in him and his health her life and thoughts were centred.

The Arab at once recognized his foe of the previous evening; but they soon came to a friendly understanding — Paula confessing her folly in holding a single and kindly-disposed man answerable for the crimes of a whole nation. Haschim replied that a right-minded spirit always came to a just conclusion at last; and then the conversation turned on her father, and the physician explained to the Arab that she was resolved never to weary of seeking the missing man.

"Nay, it is the sole aim and end of my life," cried the girl.

"A great mistake, in my opinion," said the leech.

But the merchant differed: there were things, he said, too precious to be given up for lost, even when the hope of finding them seemed as feeble and thin as a rotten reed.

"That is what I feel!" cried Paula. "And how can

you think differently, Philip? Have I not heard from your own lips that you never give up all hope of a sick man till death has put an end to it? Well, and I cling to mine—more than ever now, and I feel that I am right. My last thought, my last coin shall be spent in the search for my father, even without my uncle and his wife, and in spite of their prohibition.”

“But in such a task a young girl can hardly do without a man’s succor,” said the merchant. “I wander a great deal about the world, I speak with many foreigners from distant lands, and if you will do me the honor, pray regard me as your coadjutor, and allow me to help you in seeking for the lost hero.”

“Thanks—I fervently thank you!” cried Paula, grasping the Moslem’s hand with hearty pleasure. “Wherever you go bear my lost father in mind; I am but a poor, lonely girl, but if you find him. . .”

“Then you will know that even among the Moslems there are men. . .”

“Men who are ready to show compassion and to succor friendless women!” interrupted Paula.

“And with good success, by the blessing of the Almighty,” replied the Arab. “As soon as I find a clue you shall hear from me; now, however, I must go across the Nile to see Amrû the great general; I go in all confidence for I know that my poor, brave Rustem is in good hands, friend Philippus. My first enquiries shall be made in Fostat, rely upon that, my daughter.”

“I do indeed,” said Paula with pleased emotion. “When shall we meet again?”

“To-morrow, or the morning after at latest.”

The young girl went up to him and whispered: “We have just heard of a clue; indeed, I hope my

messenger is already on his way. Have you time to hear about it now?"

"I ought long since to have been on the other shore; — so not to-day, but to-morrow I hope." The Arab shook hands with her and the physician, and hastily took his leave.

Paula stood still, thinking. Then it struck her that Hiram was now on the further side of the Nile, within the jurisdiction of the Arab ruler, and that the merchant could perhaps intercede for him, if she were to tell him all she knew. She felt the fullest confidence in the old man, whose kind and sympathetic face was still visible to her mind's eye, and without paying any further heed to the physician she went quickly towards the door of the sick-room. A crucifix hung close by, and the nun had fallen on her knees before it, praying for her infidel patient, and beseeching the Good Shepherd to have mercy on the sheep that was not of His fold. Paula did not venture to disturb the worshipper, who was kneeling just in the narrow passage; so some minutes elapsed before the leech, observing her uneasiness, came out of the larger room, touched the nun on the shoulder, and said in a low voice of genuine kindness:

"One moment, good Sister. Your pious intercession will be heard — but this damsel is in haste." The nun rose at once and made way, sending a wrathful glance after Paula as she hurried down the stairs.

At the door of the court-yard she looked out and about for the Arab, but in vain. Then she enquired of a slave who told her that the merchant's horse had waited for him at the gate a long time, that he had just come galloping out, and by this time must have reached the bridge of boats which connected Memphis

with the island of Rodah and, beyond the island, with the fort of Babylon and the new town of Fostat.

CHAPTER XI.

PAULA went up-stairs again, distressed and vexed with herself. Was it the heat that had enervated her and robbed her of the presence of mind she usually had at her command? She herself could not understand how it was that she had not at once taken advantage of the opportunity to plead to Haschim for her faithful retainer. The merchant might have interested himself for Hiram.

The slave at the gate had told her that he had not yet been taken; the time to intercede, then, had not yet come. But she was resolved to do so, to draw the wrath of her relations down on herself, and, if need should be, to relate all she had seen in the course of the night, to save her devoted servant. It was no less than her duty: still, before humiliating Orion so deeply she would warn him. The thought of charging him with so shameful a deed pained her like the need for inflicting an injury on herself. She hated him, but she would rather have broken the most precious work of art than have branded him—him whose image still reigned in her heart, supremely glorious and attractive.

Instead of following Mary to breakfast, or offering herself as usual to play draughts with her uncle, she went back to the sick-room. To meet Neforis or

Orion at this moment would have been painful, indeed odious to her. It was long since she had felt so weary and oppressed. A conversation with the physician might perhaps prove refreshing; after the various agitations of the last few hours she longed for something, be it what it might, that should revive her spirits and give a fresh turn to her thoughts.

In the Masdakite's room the Sister coldly asked her what she wanted, and who had given her leave to assist in tending the sufferers. The leech, who at that moment was moistening the bandage on the wounded man's head, at this turned to the nun and informed her decidedly that he desired the young girl's assistance in attending on both his patients. Then he led the way into the adjoining sitting-room, saying in subdued tones :

"For the present all is well. Let us rest here a little while."

She sat down on a divan, and he on a seat opposite, and Philippus began :

"You were seeking handsome Orion just now, but you must. . . ."

"What?" she asked gravely. "And I would have you to know that the son of the house is no more to me than his mother is. Your phrase 'Handsome Orion' seems to imply something that I do not again wish to hear. But I must speak to him, and soon, in reference to an important matter."

"To what, then, do I owe the pleasure of seeing you here again? To confess the truth I did not hope for your return."

"And why not?"

"Excuse me from answering. No one likes to

hear unpleasant things. If one of my profession thinks any one is not well. . . .”

“If that is meant for me,” replied the girl, “all I can tell you is that the one thing on which I still can pride myself is my health. Say what you will—the very worst for aught I care. I want something to-day to rouse me from lethargy, even if it should make me angry.”

“Very well then,” replied the leech, “though I am plunging into deep waters!—As to health, as it is commonly understood, a fish might envy you; but the higher health—health of mind: that I fear you cannot boast of.”

“This is a serious beginning,” said Paula. “Your reproof would seem to imply that I have done you or some one else a wrong.”

“If only you had!” exclaimed he. “No, you have not sinned against us in any way. — ‘I am as I am’ is what you think of yourself; and what do you care for others?”

“That must depend on whom you mean by ‘others!’”

“Nothing less than all and each of those with whom you live—here, in this house, in this town, in this world. To you they are mere air—or less; for the air is a tangible thing that can fill a ship’s sails and drive it against the stream, whose varying nature can bring comfort or suffering to your body.”

“My world is within!” said Paula, laying her hand on her heart.

“Very true. And all creation may find room there; for what cannot the human heart, as it is called, contain! The more we require it to take and keep,

the more ready it is to hold it. It is unsafe to let the lock rust; for, if once it has grown stiff, when we want to open it no pulling and wrenching will avail. And besides — but I do not want to grieve you. — You have a habit of only looking backwards. . . .”

“And what that is pleasurable lies before me? Your blame is harsh and at the same time unjust. — Indeed, and how can you tell which way I look?”

“Because I have watched you with the eye of a friend. In truth, Paula, you have forgotten how to look around and forward. The life which lies behind you and which you have lost is all your world. I once showed you on a fragmentary papyrus that belonged to my foster father, Horus Apollo, a heathen demon represented as going forwards, while his head was turned on his neck so that the face and eyes looked behind him.”

“I remember it perfectly.”

“Well, you have long been just like him. ‘All things move,’ says Heraclitus, so you are forced to float onwards with the great stream; or, to vary the image, you must walk forwards on the high-road of life towards the common goal; but your eye is fixed on what lies behind you, feasting on the prospect of a handsome and wealthy home, kindness and tenderness, noble and loving faces, and a happy, but alas! long-lost existence. All the same, on you must go. — What must the result be?”

“I must stumble, you think, and fall?”

The physician's reproof had hit Paula all the harder because she could not conceal from herself that there was much truth in it. She had come hither on purpose to find encouragement, and these accusations troubled

even her sense of high health. Why should she submit to be taken to task like a school-girl by this man, himself still young? If this went on she would let him hear. . . . But he was speaking again, and his reply calmed her, and strengthened her conviction that he was a true and well-meaning friend.

"Not that perhaps," he said, "because — well, because nature has blessed you with perfect balance, and you go forward in full self-possession as becomes the daughter of a hero. We must not forget that it is of your soul that I am speaking; and that maintains its innate dignity of feeling among so much that is petty and mean."

"Then why need I fear to look back when it gives me so much comfort?" she eagerly enquired, as she gazed in his face with fresh spirit.

"Because it may easily lead you to tread on other people's feet! That hurts them; then they are annoyed, and they get accustomed to think grudgingly of you — you who are more lovable than they are."

"But quite unjustly; for I am not conscious of ever having intentionally grieved or hurt any one in my whole life."

"I know that; but you have done so unintentionally a thousand times."

"Then it would be better I should quit them altogether."

"No, and a thousand times no! The man who avoids his kind and lives in solitude fancies he is doing some great thing and raising himself above the level of the existence he despises. But look a little closer: it is self-interest and egoism which drive him into the cave and the cloister. In any case he neglects his highest

duty towards humanity — or let us say merely towards the society he belongs to — in order to win what he believes to be his own salvation. Society is a great body, and every individual should regard himself as a member of it, bound to serve and succor it, and even, when necessary, to make sacrifices for it. The greatest are not too great. But those who crave isolation, — you yourself — nay, hear me out, for I may never again risk the danger of incurring your wrath — desire to be a body apart. What Paula has known and possessed, she keeps locked in the treasure-house of her memory under bolt and key ; What Paula is, she feels she still must be — and for whom ? Again, for that same Paula. She has suffered great sorrow and on that her soul lives ; but this is evil nourishment, unwholesome and bad for her."

She was about to rise ; but he bent forward, with a zealous conviction that he must not allow himself to be interrupted, and lightly touched her arm as though to prevent her quitting her seat, while he went on unhesitatingly :

"You feed on your old sorrows ! Well and good. Many a time have I seen that trial can elevate the soul. It can teach a brave heart to feel the woes of others more deeply ; it can rouse a desire to assuage the griefs of others with beautiful self-devotion. Those who have known pain and affliction enjoy ease and pleasure with double satisfaction ; sufferers learn to be grateful for even the smaller joys of life. But you ? — I have long striven for courage to tell you so — you derive no benefit from suffering because you lock it up in your breast — as if a man were to enclose some precious seed in a silver trinket to carry about with him. It should

be sown in the earth, to sprout and bear fruit! However, I do not blame you; I only wish to advise you as a true and devoted friend. Learn to feel yourself a member of the body to which your destiny has bound you for the present, whether you like it or not. Try to contribute to it all that your capacities allow you achieve. You will find that you can do something for it; the casket will open, and to your surprise and delight you will perceive that the seed dropped into the soil will germinate, that flowers will open and fruit will form of which you may make bread, or extract from it a balm for yourself or for others! Then you will leave 'the dead to bury the dead,' as the Bible has it, and dedicate to the living those great powers and gracious gifts which an illustrious father and a noble mother — nay, and a long succession of distinguished ancestors, have bequeathed to a descendant worthy of them. Then you will recover that which you have lost: the joy in existence which we ought both to feel and to diffuse, because it brings with it an obligation which it is only granted to us once to fulfil. Kind fate has fitted you above a hundred thousand others for being loved; and if you do not forget the gratitude you owe for that, hearts will be turned to you, though now they shun the tree which has beset itself intentionally with thorns, and which lets its branches droop like the weeping-willows by the Nile. Thus you will lead a new and beautiful life, receiving and giving joy. The isolated and charmless existence you drag through here, to the satisfaction of none and least of all to your own, you can transform to one of fruition and satisfaction — breathing and moving healthily and beneficently in the light of day. It lies in your power. When you came

up here to give your care to these poor injured creatures, you took the first step in the new path I desire to show you, to true happiness. I did not expect you, and I am thankful that you have come; for I know that as you entered that door you may have started on the road to renewed happiness, if you have the will to walk in it. — Thank God! That is said and over!”

The leech rose and wiped his forehead, looking uneasily at Paula who had remained seated; her breath came fast, and she was more confused and undecided than he had ever seen her. She clasped her hand over her brow, and gazed, speechless, into her lap as though she wished to smother some pain.

The young physician beat his arms together, like a laborer in the winter when his hands are frozen, and exclaimed with distressful emotion: “Yes, I have spoken, and I cannot regret having done so; but what I foresaw has come to pass: The greatest happiness that ever sweetened my daily life is gone out of it! To love Plato is a noble rule, but greater than Plato is the truth; and yet, those who preach it must be prepared to find that truth scares away friends from the unpleasant vicinity of its ill-starred Apostles!”

At this Paula rose, and following the impulse of her generous heart, offered the leech her hand in all sincerity; he grasped it in both his, pressing it so tightly that it almost hurt her, and his eyes glistened with moisture as he exclaimed: “That is as I hoped; that is splendid, that is noble! Let me but be your brother, high-souled maiden! — Now, come. That poor, crazy, lovely girl will heal of her death-wound under your hands if under any!”

“I will come!” she replied heartily; and there was

something healthy and cheerful in her manner as they entered the sick-room; but her expression suddenly changed, and she asked pensively:

"And supposing we restore the unhappy girl—what good will she get by it?"

"She will breathe and see the sunshine," replied the leech; "she will be grateful to you, and finally she will contribute what she can to the whole body. She will be alive in short, she will live. For life—feel it, understand it as I do—life is the best thing we have."

Paula gazed with astonishment in the man's unlovely but enthusiastic face. How radiantly joyful!

No one could have called it ugly at this moment, or have said that it lacked charm.

He believed what he had asserted with such fervent feeling, though it was in contradiction to a view he had held only yesterday and often defended: that life in itself was misery to all who could not grasp it of their own strength, and make something of it worth making.—At this moment he really felt that it was the best gift.

Paula went forward, and his eyes followed her, as the gaze of the pious pilgrim is fixed on the holy image he has travelled to see, over seas and mountains, with bruised feet.

They went up to the sick girl's bed. The nun drew back, making her own reflections on the physician's altered mien, and his childlike, beaming contentment, as he explained to Paula what particular peril threatened the sufferer, and by what treatment he hoped to save her; how to make the bandages and give the medicines, and how necessary it was to accept the poor crazy girl's fancies and treat them as rational ideas so long as the fever lasted.

At last he was forced to go and attend to other patients. Paula remained sitting at the head of the bed and gazing at the face of the sufferer.

How fair it was! And Orion had snatched this rose in the bud, and trodden it under foot! She had, no doubt, felt for him what Paula herself felt. And now? Did she feel nothing but hatred of him, or could her heart, in spite of her indignation and scorn, not altogether cast off the spell that had once bound it?

What weakness was this! She was, she must, she would be his foe!

Her thoughts went back to the idle and futile life that she had led for so many years. The physician had hit the mark; and he had been too easy rather than severe. Yes, she would begin to make good use of her powers—but how, in what way, here and among these people? How transfigured poor Philippus had seemed when she had given him her hand; with what energy had he poured forth his words.

“And how false,” she mused, “is the saying that the body is the mirror of the soul! If it were so, Philippus would have the face of Orion, and Orion that of Philippus.” But could Orion’s heart be wholly reprobate? Nay, that was impossible; her every impulse resisted the belief. She must either love him or hate him, there was no third alternative; but as yet the two passions were struggling within her in a way that was quite intolerable.

The physician had spoken of being a brother to her, and she could not help smiling at the idea. She could, she thought, live very happily and calmly with him, with her nurse Betta, and with the learned old friend who shared his home, and of whom he had often talked

to her ; she could join him in his studies, help him in his calling, and discuss many things well worth knowing. Such a life, she told herself, would be a thousand times preferable to this, with Neforis. In him she had certainly found a friend ; and her glad recognition of the fact was the first step towards the fulfilment of his promise, since it showed that her heart was still ready to go forth to the kindness of another.

Amid these meditations, however, her anxiety for Hiram constantly recurred to her, and it was clear to her mind that, if she and Orion should come to extremities, she could no longer dwell under the governor's roof. Often she had longed for nothing so fervently as to be able to quit it ; but to-day it filled her with dread, for parting from her uncle necessarily involved parting from his son. She hated him ; still, to lose sight of him altogether would be very hard to bear. To go with Philippus and live with him as his sister would never do ; nay, it struck her as something inconceivable, strangely incongruous.

Meanwhile she listened to Mandane's breathing and treated her in obedience to the leech's orders, longing for his return ; presently however, not he but the nun came to the bed-side, laid her hand on the girl's forehead, and without paying any heed to Paula, whispered kindly : " That is right child, sleep away ; have a nice long sleep. So long as she can be kept quiet ; if only she goes on like this ! — Her head is cooler. Philippus will certainly say there is scarcely any fever. Thank God, the worst danger is over ! "

" Oh, how glad I am ! " cried Paula, and she spoke with such warmth and sincerity that the nun gave her a friendly nod and left the sick girl to her care, quite satisfied.

It was long since Paula had felt so happy. She fancied that her presence had had a good affect on the sufferer, that Mandane had already been brought by her nursing to the threshold of a new life. Paula, who but just now had regarded herself as a persecuted victim of Fate, now breathed more freely in the belief that she too might bring joy to some one. She looked into Mandane's more than pretty face with real joy and tenderness, laid the bandage which had slipped aside gently over her ears, and breathed a soft kiss on her long silken lashes.

She rapidly grew in favor with the shrewd nun; when the hour for prayer came round, the sister included in her petitions Paula—the orphan under a stranger's roof, the Greek girl born, by the inscrutable decrees of God, outside the pale of her saving creed.

At length Philippus returned; he was rejoiced at his new friend's brightened aspect, and declared that Mandane had, under her care, got past the first and worst danger, and might be expected to recover, slowly indeed, but completely.

After Paula had renewed the compress—and he intentionally left her to do it unaided, he said encouragingly :

“ How quickly you have learnt your business.— Now, the patient is asleep again; the Sister will keep watch, and for the present we can be of no use to the girl; sleep is the best nourishment she can have. But with us—or at any rate with me, it is different. We have still two hours to wait for the next meal: my breakfast is standing untouched, and yours no doubt fared the same; so be my guest. They always send up enough to satisfy six bargemen.”

Paula liked the proposal, for she had long been hungry. The nun was desired to hasten to fetch some more plates, of drinking-vessels there was no lack — and soon the new allies were seated face to face, each at a small table. He carved the duck and the roast quails, put the salad before her and some steaming artichokes, which the nun had brought up at the request of the cook whose only son the physician had saved; he invited her attention to the little pies, the fruits and cakes which were laid ready, and played the part of butler; and then, while they heartily enjoyed the meal, they carried on a lively conversation.

Paula for the first time asked Philippus to tell her something of his early youth; he began with an account of his present mode of life, as a partner in the home of the singular old priest of Isis, Horus Apollo, a diligent student; he described his strenuous activity by day and his quiet studies by night, and gave everything such an amusing aspect that often she could not help laughing. But presently he was sad, as he told her how at an early age he had lost his father and mother, and was left to depend solely on himself and on a very small fortune, having no relations; for his father had been a grammarian, invited to Alexandria from Athens, who had been forced to make a road for himself through life, which had lain before him like an overgrown jungle of papyrus and reeds. Every hour of his life was devoted to his work, for a rough, outspoken Goliath, such as he, never could find it easy to meet with helpful patrons. He had managed to live by teaching in the high schools of Alexandria, Athens, and Cesarea, and by preparing medicines from choice herbs — drinking water instead of wine, eating bread and fruit instead of

quails and pies; and he had made a friend of many a good man, but never yet of a woman—it would be difficult with such a face as his!

“Then I am the first?” said Paula, who felt deep respect for the man who had made his way by his own energy to the eminent position which he had long held, not merely in Memphis, but among Egyptian physicians generally.

He nodded, and with such a blissful smile that she felt as though a sunbeam had shone into her very soul. He noticed this at once, raised his goblet, and drank to her, exclaiming with a flush on his cheek:

“The joy that comes to others early has come to me late; but then the woman I call my friend is matchless!”

“Well, it is to be hoped she may not prove to be so wicked as you just now described her. — If only our alliance is not fated to end soon and abruptly.”

“Ah!” cried the physician, “every drop of blood in my veins. . . .”

“You would be ready to shed it for me,” Paula broke in, with a pathetic gesture, borrowed from a great tragedian she had seen at the theatre in Damascus. “But never fear: it will not be a matter of life and death—at worst they will but turn me out of the house and of Memphis.”

“You?” cried Philippus startled, “but who would dare to do so?”

“They who still regard me as a stranger. — You described the case admirably. If they have their way, my dear new friend, our fate will be like that of the learned Dionysius of Cyrene.”

“Of Cyrene?”

"Yes. It was my father who told me the story. When Dionysius sent his son to the High School at Athens, he sat down to write a treatise for him on all the things a student should do and avoid. He devoted himself to the task with the utmost diligence; but when, at the end of four years, he could write on the last leaf of the roll. "Here this book hath a happy ending," the young man whose studies it was intended to guide came home to Cyrene, a finished scholar."

"And we have struck up a friendship. . . ?"

"And made a treaty of alliance, only to be parted ere long."

Philippus struck his fist vehemently on the little table in front of his couch and exclaimed: "That I will find means to prevent! — But now, tell me in confidence, what has last happened between you and the family down-stairs?"

"You will know quite soon enough."

"Whichever of them fancies that you can be turned out of doors without more ado and there will be an end between us, may find himself mistaken!" cried the physician with an angry sparkle in his eyes. "I have a right to put in a word in this house. It has not nearly come to that yet, and what is more, it never shall. You shall quit it certainly; but of your own free will, and holding your head high. . . ."

As he spoke the door of the outer room was hastily opened and the next instant Orion was standing before them, looking with great surprise at the pair who had just finished their meal. He said coldly:

"I am disturbing you, I see."

"Not in the least," replied the leech; and the young man, perceiving what bad taste it would be and

how much out of place to give expression to his jealous annoyance, said, with a smile: "If only it had been granted to a third person to join in this symposium!"

"We found each other all-sufficient company," answered Philippus.

"A man who could believe in all the doctrines of the Church as readily as in that statement would be assured of salvation," laughed Orion. "I am no spoilsport, respected friends; but I deeply regret that I must, on the present occasion, disturb your happiness. The matter in question. . . ." And he felt he might now abandon the jesting tone which so little answered to his mood, "is a serious one. In the first instance it concerns your freedman, my fair foe."

"Has Hiram come back?" asked Paula, feeling herself turn pale.

"They have brought him in," replied Orion. "My father at once summoned the court of judges. Justice has a swift foot here with us; I am sorry for the man, but I cannot prevent its taking its course. I must beg of you to appear at the examination when you are called."

"The whole truth shall be told!" said Paula sternly and firmly.

"Of course," replied Orion. Then turning to the physician, he added: "I would request you, worthy Esculapius, to leave me and my cousin together for a few minutes. I want to give her a word of counsel which will certainly be to her advantage."

Philippus glanced enquiringly at the girl; she said with clear decision: "You and I can have no secrets. What I may hear, Philippus too may know."

Orion, with a shrug, turned to leave the room.

On the threshold he paused, exclaiming with some excitement and genuine distress:

"If you will not listen to me for your own sake, do so at least, whatever ill-feeling you may bear me, because I implore you not to refuse me this favor. It is a matter of life or death to one human being, of joy or misery to another. Do not refuse me. — I ask nothing unreasonable, Philippus. Do as I entreat you and leave us for a moment alone."

Again the physician's eyes consulted the young girl's; this time she said: "Go!" and he immediately quitted the room.

Orion closed the door.

"What have I done, Paula," he began with panting breath, "that since yesterday you have shunned me like a leper — that you are doing your utmost to bring me to ruin?"

"I mean to plead for the life of a trusty servant; nothing more," she said indifferently.

"At the risk of disgracing me!" he retorted bitterly.

"At that risk, no doubt, if you are indeed so base as to throw your own guilt on the shoulders of an honest man."

"Then you watched me last night?"

"The merest chance led me to see you come out of the tablinum. . . ."

"I do not ask you now what took you there so late," he interrupted, "for it revolts me to think anything of you but the best, the highest. — But you? What have you experienced at my hands but friendship — nay, for concealment or dissimulation is here folly — but what a lover. . . ?"

"A lover!" cried Paula indignantly. "A lover?"

Dare you utter the word, when you have offered your heart and hand to another — you. . . .”

“Who told you so?” asked Orion gloomily.

“Your own mother.”

“That is it; so that is it?” cried the young man, clasping his hands convulsively. “Now I begin to see, now I understand. But stay. For if it is indeed that which has roused you to hate me and persecute me, you must love me, Paula — you do love me, and then, noblest and sweetest. . . .” He held out his hand; but she struck it aside, exclaiming in a tremulous voice:

“Be under no delusion. I am not one of the feeble lambs whom you have beguiled by the misuse of your gifts and advantages, and who then are eager to kiss your hands. I am the daughter of Thomas; and another woman’s betrothed, who craves my embraces on the way to his wedding, will learn to his rueing that there are women who scorn his disgraceful suit and can avenge the insult intended them. Go — go to your judges! You, a false witness, may accuse Hiram, but I will proclaim you, you the son of this house, as the thief! We shall see which they believe.”

“Me!” cried Orion, and his eyes flashed as wrathfully and vindictively as her own. “The son of the Mukaukas! Oh, that you were not a woman! I would force you to your knees and compel you to crave my pardon. How dare you point your finger at a man whose life has hitherto been as spotless as your own white raiment? Yes, I did go to the tablinum — I did tear the emerald from the hanging; but I did it in a fit of recklessness, and in the knowledge that what is my father’s is mine. I threw away the gem to gratify

a mere fancy, a transient whim. Cursed be the hour when I did it! — Not on account of the deed itself, but of the consequences it may entail through your mad hatred. Jealousy, petty, unworthy jealousy is at the bottom of it! And of whom are you jealous?"

"Of no one; not even of your betrothed, Katharina," replied Paula with forced composure. "What are you to me that, to spare you humiliation, I should risk the life of the most honest soul living? I have said: The judges shall decide between you."

"No, they shall not!" stormed Orion. "At least, not as you intend! Beware, beware, I say, of driving me to extremities! I still see in you the woman I loved; I still offer you what lies within my power: to let everything end for the best for you. . . ."

"For me! Then I, too, am to suffer for your guilt?"

"Did you hear the barking of hounds just now?"

"I heard dogs yelping."

"Very well. — Your freedman has been brought in, the pack got on his scent and have now been let into the house close to the tablinum. The dogs would not stir beyond the threshold and on the white marble step, towards the right-hand side, the print of a man's foot was found in the dust. It is a peculiar one, for instead of five toes there are but three. Your Hiram was fetched in, and he was found to have the same number of toes as the mark on the marble, neither more nor less. A horse trod on his foot, in your father's stable, and two of his toes had to be cut off: we got this out of the stammering wretch with some difficulty. — On the other side of the door-way there was a smaller print, but though the dogs paid no heed to that I ex-

amined it, and assured myself—how, I need not tell you—that it was you who had stood there. He, who has no business whatever in the house, must have made his way last night into the tablinum, our treasury. Now, put yourself in the judges' place. How can such facts be outweighed by the mere word of a girl who, as every one knows, is on anything rather than good terms with my mother, and who will leave no stone unturned to save her servant."

"Infamous!" cried Paula. "Hiram did not steal the gem, as you must know who stole it. The emerald he sold was my property; and were those stones really so much alike that even the seller. . ."

"Yes, indeed. He could not tell one from the other. Evil spirits have been at work all through, devilish, malignant demons. It would be enough to turn one's brain, if life were not so full of enigmas! You yourself are the greatest.—Did you give the Syrian your emerald to sell in order to fly from this house with the money?—You are silent? Then I am right. What can my father be to you—you do not love my mother—and the son!—Paula, Paula, you are perhaps doing him an injustice—you hate him, and it is a pleasure to you to injure him."

"I do not wish to hurt you or any one," replied the girl. "And you have guessed wrongly.—Your father refused me the means of seeking mine."

"And you wanted to procure money to search for one who is long since dead!—Even my mother admits that you speak the truth; if she is right, and you really take no pleasure in doing me a mischief, listen to me, follow my advice, and grant my prayer! I do not ask any great matter."

“Speak on then.”

“Do you know what a man’s honor is to him? Need I tell you that I am a lost and despised man if I am found guilty of this act of the maddest folly by the judges of my own house? It may cost my father his life if he hears that the word ‘guilty’ is pronounced on me; and I—I—what would become of me I cannot foresee!—I—oh God, oh God, preserve me from frenzy!—But I must be calm; time presses . . . How different it is for your servant; he seems ready even now to take the guilt on himself, for, whatever he is asked, he still keeps silence. Do you do the same; and if the judges insist on knowing what you had to do with the Syrian last night—for the dogs traced the scent to your staircase—hazard a conjecture that the faithful fellow stole the emerald in order to gratify your desire to search for your father, his beloved master. If you can make up your mind to so great a sacrifice—oh, that I should have to ask it of you!—I swear to you by all I hold sacred, by yourself and by my father’s head, I will set Hiram free within three days, unbeaten and unhurt, and magnificently indemnified; and I will myself help him on the way whither he may desire to go, or you to send him, in search of your father. —Be silent; remain neutral in the background; that is all I ask, and I will keep my word—that, at any rate, you do not doubt?” She had listened to him with bated breath; she pitied him deeply as he stood there, a suppliant in bitter anguish of soul, a criminal who still could not understand that he was one, and who relied on the confidence that, only yesterday, he still had had the right to exact from all the world. He appeared before her like a fine proud tree struck by lightning,

whose riven trunk, trembling to its fall, must be crushed to the earth by the first storm, unless the gardener props it up. She longed to be able to forget all he had brought upon her and to grasp his hand in friendly consolation; but her deeply aggrieved pride helped her to preserve the cold and repellent manner she had so far succeeded in assuming.

With much hesitation and reserve she consented to be silent as long as he kept his promise. It was for his father's sake, rather than his own, that she would so far become his accomplice: at the same time everything else was at an end between them, and she should bless the hour which might see her severed from him and his for ever.

The end of her speech was in a strangely hard and repellent tone; she felt she must adopt it to disguise how deeply she was touched by his unhappiness and by the extinction of the sunshine in him which had once warmed her own heart too with bliss. To him it seemed that an icy rigor breathed in her words — bitter contempt and hostile revulsion. He had some difficulty in keeping himself from breaking out again in violent wrath. He was almost sorry that he had trusted her with his secret and begged her for mercy, instead of leaving things to run their course, and if it had come to the worst, dragging her to perdition with him. Sooner would he forfeit honor and peace than humble himself again before this pitiless and cold-hearted foe. At this moment he really hated her, and only wished it were possible to fight her, to break her pride, to see her vanquished and crying for quarter at his feet. It was with a great effort — with tingling cheeks and constrained utterance that he said:

"Severance from you is indeed best for us all. — Be ready: the judges will send for you soon."

"Very well," she replied. "I will be silent; you have only to provide for the Syrian's safety. You have given me your word."

"And so long as you keep yours I will keep mine. Or else. . ." the words would come from his quivering lips — "or else war to the knife!"

"War to the knife!" she echoed with flashing eyes. "But one thing more. I have proof that the emerald which Hiram sold belonged to me. By all the saints — proof!"

"So much the better for you," he said. "Woe to us both, if you force me to forget that you are a woman!"

And he left the room with a rapid step.

CHAPTER XII.

ORION went down stairs scowling and clenching his fists. His heart ached to bursting.

What had he done, what had befallen him? That a woman should dare to treat him so! — a woman whom he had deigned to love — the loveliest and noblest of women; but at the same time the haughtiest, most vengeful, and most hateful.

He had once read this maxim: "When a man has committed a base action, if only one other knows of it he carries the death-warrant of his peace in the bosom of his garment." He felt the full weight of this sentence; and the other — the one who knew — was Paula, the

woman of all others whom he most wished should look up to him. But yesterday it had been a vision of heaven on earth to dream of holding her in his arms and calling her his; now he had but one wish: that he could humble and punish her. Oh, that his hands should be tied, that he should be dependent on her mercy like a condemned criminal! It was inconceivable — intolerable!

But she should be taught to know him. He had passed through life hitherto as white as a swan; if this luckless hour and this woman made him appear as a vulture, it was not his fault, it was hers. She should soon see which was the stronger of the two. He would punish her in every way in which a woman can be punished, even if the way to it led through crime and misery! He was not afraid that the leech had won her affections, for he knew, with strange certainty that, in spite of the hostility she displayed, her heart was his and his alone. "The gold coin called love," said he to himself, "has two faces: tender devotion and bitter aversion; just now she is showing me the latter. But, however different the image and superscription may be on the two sides, if you ring it, it always gives out the same tone; and I can hear it even in her most insulting words."

When the family met at table he made Paula's excuses; he himself ate only a few mouthfuls, for the judges had assembled some time since and were waiting for him.

The right of life and death had been placed in the hands of the ancestors of the Mukaukas, powerful princes of provinces; they had certainly wielded it even in the dynasty of Psammitichus, whose power

had been put to a terrible end by Cambyses the Persian. And still the Uraeus snake — the asp whose bite caused almost instant death, reared its head as the time-honored emblem of this privilege, by the side of St. George the Dragon-slayer, over the palaces of the Mukaukas at Memphis, and at Lykopolis in Upper Egypt. And in both these places the head of the family retained the right of arbitrary judgment and capital punishment over the retainers of his house and the inhabitants of the district he governed, after Justinian first, and then the Emperor Heraclius, had confirmed them in their old prerogative. The chivalrous St. George was placed between the snakes so as to replace a heathen symbol by a Christian one. Formerly indeed the knight himself had had the head of a sparrow-hawk: that is to say of the god Horus, who had overthrown the evil-spirit, Seth-Typhon, to avenge his father; but about two centuries since the heathen crocodile-destroyer had been transformed into the Christian conqueror of the dragon.

After the Arab conquest the Moslems had left all ancient customs and rights undisturbed, including those of the Mukaukas.

The court which assembled to sit in judgment on all cases concerning the adherents of the house consisted of the higher officials of the governor's establishment. The Mukaukas himself was president, and his grown-up son was his natural deputy. During Orion's absence, Nilus, the head of the exchequer, a shrewd and judicious Egyptian, had generally represented his invalid master; but on the present occasion Orion was appointed to take his place, and to preside over the assembly.

The governor's son hastened to his father's bedroom to beg him to lend him his ring as a token of the authority transferred to him; the Mukaukas had willingly allowed him to take it off his finger, and had enjoined him to exercise relentless severity. Generally he inclined to leniency; but breaking into a house was punishable with death, and in this instance it was but right to show no mercy, out of deference to the Arab merchant. But Orion, mindful of his covenant with Paula, begged his father to give him full discretion. The old Moslem was a just man, who would agree to a mitigated sentence under the circumstances; besides, the culprit was not in strict fact a member of the household, but in the service of a relation.

The Mukaukas applauded his son's moderation and judgment. If only he had been in rather better health he himself would have had the pleasure of being present at the sitting, to see him fulfil for the first time so important a function, worthy of his birth and position.

Orion kissed his father's hand with heart-felt but melancholy emotion, for this praise from the man he so truly loved was a keen pleasure; and yet he felt that it was of ill-omen that his duties as judge, of which he knew the sacred solemnity, should be thus — thus begun.

It was in a softened mood, sunk in thought as to how he could best save Hiram and leave Paula's name altogether out of the matter, that he went to the hall of justice; and there he found the nurse Perpetua in eager discussion with Nilus.

The old woman was quite beside herself. In the clatter of her loom she had heard nothing of what had

been going on till a few minutes ago; now she was ready to swear to the luckless Hiram's innocence. The stone he had sold had belonged to his young mistress, and thank God there was no lack of evidence of the fact; the setting of the emerald was lying safe and sound in Paula's trunk. Happily she had had an opportunity of speaking to her; and that she, the daughter of Thomas, should be brought before the tribunal, like a citizen's daughter or slave-girl, was unheard of, shameful!

At this Orion roughly interfered; he desired the old gate-keeper to conduct Perpetua at once to the store-room next to the tablinum, where the various stuffs prepared for the use of the household were laid by, and to keep her there under safe guard till further notice. The tone in which he gave the order was such that even the nurse did not remonstrate; and Nilus, for his part obeyed in silence when Orion bid him return to his place among the judges.

Nilus went back to the judgment-hall in uneasy consternation. Never before had he seen his young lord in this mood. As he heard the nurse's statement the veins had swelled in his smooth youthful forehead, his nostrils had quivered with convulsive agitation, his voice had lost all its sweetness, and his eyes had a sinister gleam.

Orion was now alone; he ground his teeth with rage. Paula had betrayed him in spite of her promise; and how mean was her woman's cunning! She could be silent before the judges — yes. Silent in all confidence now, to the very last; but the nurse, her mouth-piece, had already put Nilus, the keenest and most important member of the court, in possession of the

evidence which spoke for her and against him. It was shocking, disgraceful! Base and deliberately malicious treachery. But the end was not yet: he still was free to act and to ward off the spiteful stroke by a counter-thrust. How it should be dealt was clear from Perpetua's statement; but his conscience, his instincts and long habits of submission to what was right, good, and fitting held him back. Not only had he never himself done a base or a mean action; he loathed it in another, and the only thing he could do to render Paula's perfidy harmless was, as he could not deny, original and bold, but at the same time detestable and shameful.

Still, he could not and he would not succumb in this struggle. Time pressed. Long reflection was impossible; suddenly he felt carried away by a fierce and mad longing to fight it out — he felt as he had felt on a race-day in the hippodrome, when he had driven his own quadriga ahead of all the rest.

Onwards, then, onwards; and if the chariot were wrecked, if the horses were killed, if his wheels maimed his comrades overthrown in the arena — still, onwards, onwards!

A few hasty steps brought him to the lodge of the gate-keeper, a sturdy old man who had held his post for forty years. He had formerly been a locksmith and it still was part of his duty to undertake the repairs of the simple household utensils. Orion as a youth had been a beautiful and engaging boy and a great favorite with this worthy man; he had delighted in sitting in his little room and handing him the tools for his work. He himself had remarkable mechanical facility and had been the old man's apt pupil; nay, he had made such progress as to be able to carve pretty little boxes,

prayer-book cases, and such like, and provide them with locks, as gifts to his parents on their birthdays — a festival always kept with peculiar solemnity in Egypt, and marked by giving and receiving presents. He understood the use of tools, and he now hastily selected such as he needed. On the window-ledge stood a bunch of flowers which he had ordered for Paula the day before, and which he had forgotten to fetch this terrible morning. With this in one hand, and the tools in the breast of his robe he hastened upstairs.

“Onwards, I must keep on!” he muttered, as he entered Paula’s room, bolted the door inside and, kneeling before her chest, tossed the flowers aside. If he was discovered, he would say that he had gone into his cousin’s chamber to give her the bouquet.

“Onwards; I must go on!” was still his thought, as he unscrewed the hinge on which the lid of the trunk moved. His hands trembled, his breath came fast, but he did his task quickly. This was the right way to work, for the lock was a peculiar one, and could not have been opened without spoiling it. He raised the lid, and the first thing his hand came upon in the chest was the necklace with the empty medallion — it was as though some kind Genius were aiding him. The medallion hung but slightly to the elegantly-wrought chain; to detach it and conceal it about his person was the work of a minute.

But now the most resolute. “On, on. . . .” was of no further avail. This was theft: he had robbed her whom, if she only had chosen it, he was ready to load with everything wherewith fate had so superabundantly blessed him. No, this — this. . . .

A singular idea suddenly flashed through his brain ; a thought which brought a smile to his lips even at this moment of frightful tension. He acted upon it forthwith : he drew out from within his under-garment a gem that hung round his neck by a gold chain. This jewel — a masterpiece by one of the famous Greek engravers of heathen antiquity — had been given him in Constantinople in exchange for a team of four horses to which his greatest friend there had taken a fancy. It was in fact of greater price than half a dozen fine horses. Half beside himself, and as if intoxicated, Orion followed the wild impulse to which he had yielded ; indeed, he was glad to have so precious a jewel at hand to hang in the place of the worthless gold frame-work. It was done with a pinch ; but screwing up the hinge again was a longer task, for his hands trembled violently — and as the moment drew near in which he meant to let Paula feel his power, the more quickly his heart beat, and the more difficult he found it to control his mind to calm deliberation.

After he had unbolted the door he stood like a thief spying the long corridor of the strangers' wing, and this increased his excitement to a frenzy of rage with the world, and fate, and most of all with her who had compelled him to stoop to such base conduct. But now the charioteer had the reins and goad in his hand. Onwards now, onwards !

He flew down stairs, three steps at a time, as he had been wont when a boy. In the anteroom he met Eudoxia, Mary's Greek governess, who had just brought her refractory pupil into the house, and he tossed her the nosegay he still held in his hands ; then, without heeding the languishing glances the middle-aged dam-

sel sent after him with her thanks, he hastened back to the gate-keeper's lodge where he hurriedly disburdened himself of the locksmith's tools.

A few minutes later he entered the judgment-hall. Nilus the treasurer showed him to the governor's raised seat, but an overpowering bashfulness kept him from taking this position of honor. It was with a burning brow, and looks so ominously dark that the assembly gazed at him with timid astonishment, that he opened the proceedings with a few broken sentences. He himself scarcely knew what he was saying, and heard his own voice as vaguely as though it were the distant roar of waves. However, he succeeded in clearly stating all that had happened: he showed the assembly the stone which had been stolen and recovered; he explained how the thief had been taken; he declared Paula's freedman to be guilty of the robbery, and called upon him to bring forward anything he could in his own defence. But the accused could only stammer out that he was not guilty. He was not able to defend himself, but his mistress could no doubt give evidence that would justify him.

Orion pushed the hair from his forehead, proudly raised his aching head, and addressed the judges:

"His mistress is a lady of rank allied to our house. Let us keep her out of this odious affair as is but seemly. Her nurse gave Nilus some information which may perhaps avail to save this unhappy man. We will neglect nothing to that end; but you, who are less familiar with the leading circumstances, must bear this in mind to guard yourselves against being misled: This lady is much attached to the accused; she clings to him and Perpetua as the only friends remaining to her

from her native home. Moreover, there is nothing to surprise me or you in the fact that a noble woman, as she is, should assume the onus of another's crime, and place herself in a doubtful light to save a man who has hitherto been honest and faithful. The nurse is here; shall she be called, or have you, Nilus, heard from her everything that her mistress can say in favor of her freedman?"

"Perpetua told me, and told you, too, my lord, certain credible facts," replied the treasurer. "But I could not repeat them so exactly as she herself, and I am of opinion that the woman should be brought before the court."

"Then call her," said Orion, fixing his eyes on vacancy above the heads of the assembly, with a look of sullen dignity.

After a long and anxious pause the old woman was brought in. Confident in her righteous cause she came forward boldly; she blamed Hiram somewhat sharply for keeping silence so long, and then explained that Paula, to procure money for her search for her father, had made the freedman take a costly emerald out of its setting in her necklace, and that it was the sale of this gem that had involved her fellow-countryman in this unfortunate suspicion.

The nurse's deposition seemed to have biassed the greater part of the council in favor of the accused; but Orion did not give them time to discuss their impressions among themselves. Hardly had Perpetua ceased speaking, when Orion took up the emerald, which was lying on the table before him, exclaiming excitedly, nay, angrily:

"And the stone which is recognized by the man

who sold it — an expert in gems — as being that which was taken from the hanging, and unique of its kind, is supposed, by some miracle of nature, to have suddenly appeared in duplicate? — Malignant spirits still wander through the world, but would hardly dare to play their tricks in this Christian house. You all know what ‘old women’s tales’ are; and the tale that old woman has told us is one of the most improbable of its class. ‘Tell that to Apelles the Jew,’ said Horace the Roman; but his fellow-Israelite, Gamaliel” — and he turned to the jeweller who was sitting with the other witnesses — “will certainly not believe it; still less I, who see through this tissue of falsehood. The daughter of the noble Thomas has condescended to weave it with the help of that woman — a skilled weaver, she — to spread it before us in order to mislead us, and so to save her faithful servant from imprisonment, from the mines, or from death. These are the facts. — Do I err, woman, or do you still adhere to your statement?”

The nurse, who had hoped to find in Orion her mistress’ advocate, had listened to his speech with growing horror. Her eyes flashed as she looked at him, first with mockery and then with vehement disgust; but, though they filled with tears at this unlooked-for attack, she preserved her presence of mind, and declared she had spoken the truth, and nothing but the truth, as she always did. The setting of her mistress’ emerald would prove her statement.

Orion shrugged his shoulders, desired the woman to fetch her mistress, whose presence was now indispensable, and called to the treasurer:

“Go with her, Nilus! And let a servant bring the trunk here that the owner may open it in the presence

of us all and before any one else touches the contents. I should not be the right person to undertake it since no one in this Jacobite household — hardly even one of yourselves — has found favor in the eyes of the Melchite. She has unfortunately a special aversion for me, so I must depute to others every proceeding that could lead to a misunderstanding. — Conduct her hither, Nilus; of course with the respect due to a maiden of high rank."

While the envoy was gone Orion paced the room with swift, restless steps, Once only he paused and addressed the judges:

"But supposing the empty setting should be found, how do you account for the existence of two — two gems, each unique of its kind? It is distracting! Here is a soft-hearted girl daring to mislead a serious council of justice for the sake, for the sake of. . . ." he stamped his foot with rage and continued his silent march.

"He is as yet but a beginner," thought the assembled officials as they watched his agitation. "Otherwise how could he allow such an absurd attempt to clear an accused thief to affect him so deeply, or disturb his temper?"

Paula's arrival presently put an end to Orion's pacing the room. He received her with a respectful bow and signed to her to be seated. Then he bid Nilus recapitulate the results of the proceedings up to the present stage, and what he and his colleagues supposed to be her motive for asserting that the stolen emerald was her property. He would as far as possible leave it to the others to question her, since she knew full well on what terms she was with himself. Even before he had

come into the council-room she had offered her explanation of the robbery to Nilus, through her nurse Perpetua; but it would have seemed fairer and more friendly in his eyes — and here he raised his voice — if she had chosen to confide to him, Orion, her plan for helping the freedman. Then he might have been able to warn her. He could only regard this mode of action, independently of him, as a fresh proof of her dislike, and she must hold herself responsible for the consequences. Justice must now take its course with inexorable rigor.

The wrathful light in his eyes showed her what she had to expect from him, and that he was prepared to fight her to the end. She saw that he thought that she had broken the promise she had but just now given him; but she had not commissioned Perpetua to interfere in the matter; on the contrary, she had desired the woman to leave it to her to produce her evidence only in the last extremity. Orion must believe that she had done him a wrong; still, could that make him so far forget himself as to carry out his threats, and sacrifice an innocent man to divert suspicion from himself, while he branded her as a false witness? Aye, even from that he would not shrink! His flaming glance, his abrupt demeanor, his laboring breath, proclaimed it plainly enough. — Then let the struggle begin! At this moment she would have died rather than have tried to mollify him by a word of excuse. The turmoil in his whole being vibrated through hers. She was ready to throw herself at his feet and implore him to control himself, to guard himself against further wrong-doing — but she maintained her proud dignity, and the eyes that met his were not less indignant and defiant than his own.

They stood face to face like two young eagles preparing to fight, with feathers on end, arching their pinions and stretching their necks. She, confident of victory in the righteousness of her cause, and far more anxious for him than for herself; he, almost blind to his own danger, but, like a gladiator confronting his antagonist in the arena, far more eager to conquer than to protect his own life and limb.

While Nilus explained to her what, in part, she already knew, and repeated their suspicion that she had been tempted to make a false declaration to save the life of her servant, whose devotion, no doubt, to his missing master had led him to commit the robbery; she kept her eye on Orion rather than on the speaker. At last Nilus referred to the trunk, which had been brought from Paula's room under her own eyes, informing her that the assembly were ready to hear and examine into anything she had to say in her own defence.

Orion's agitation rose to its highest pitch. He felt that the blood had fled from his cheeks, and his thoughts were in utter confusion. The council, the accused, his enemy Paula — everything in the room lay before him shrouded in a whirl of green mist. All he saw seemed to be tinted with light emerald green. The hair, the faces, the dresses of those present gleamed and floated in a greenish light; and not till Paula went up to the chest with a firm, haughty step, drew out a small key, gave it to the treasurer, and answered his speech with three words: "Open the box!" — uttering them with cold condescension as though even this were too much — not till then did he see clearly once more: her bright brown hair, the fire of her blue eyes, the rose and white of her complexion, the light dress which

draped her fine figure in noble folds, and her triumphant smile. How beautiful, how desirable was this woman! A few minutes and she would be worsted in this contest; but the triumph had cost him not only herself, but all that was good and pure in his soul, and worthy of his forefathers. An inward voice cried it out to him, but he drowned it in the shout of "Onwards," like a chariot-driver. Yes — on; still on towards the goal; away over ruins and stones, through blood and dust, till she bowed her proud neck, crushed and beaten, and sued for mercy.

The lid of the trunk flew open. Paula stooped, lifted the necklace, held it out to the judges, pulling it straight by the two ends . . . Ah! what a terrible, heart-rending cry of despair! Orion even, never, never wished to hear the like again. Then she flung the jewel on the table, exclaiming: "Shameful, shameful! atrocious!" she tottered backwards and clung to her faithful Betta; for her knees were giving way, and she felt herself in danger of sinking to the ground.

Orion sprang forward to support her, but she thrust him aside, with a glance so full of anguish, rage and intense contempt that he stood motionless, and clasped his hand over his heart. — And this deed, which was to work such misery for two human beings, he had smiled in doing! This practical joke which concealed a death-warrant — to what fearful issues might it not lead?

Paula had sunk speechless on to a seat, and he stood staring in silence, till a burst of laughter broke from the assembly and old Psamtik, the captain of the guard, who had long been a member of the council of Justice, exclaimed:

"By my soul, a splendid stone! There is the

heathen god Eros with his winged sweetheart Psyche smiling in his face. Did you never read that pretty story by Apuleius — ‘The Golden Ass’ it is called? The passage is in that. Holy Luke! how finely it is carved. The lady has taken out the wrong necklace. Look, Gamaliel, where could your green pigeon’s egg have found a place in that thing?” and he pointed to the gem.

“Nowhere,” said the Jew. “The noble lady. . .”

But Orion roughly bid the witness to be silent, and Nilus, taking up the engraved gem, examined it closely. Then he — he the grave, just man, on whose support Paula had confidently reckoned — went up to her and with a regretful shrug asked her whether the other necklace with the setting of which she had spoken was in the trunk.

The blood ran cold in her veins. This thing that had happened was as startling as a miracle. But no! No higher Power had anything to do with this blow. Orion believed that she had failed in her promise of screening him by her silence, and this, this was his revenge. By what means — how he had gone to work, was a mystery. What a trick! — and it had succeeded! But should she take it like a patient child? No. A thousand times no! Suddenly all her old powers of resistance came back; hatred steeled her wavering will; and, as in fancy, he had seen himself in the circus, driving in a race, so she pictured herself seated at the chess-board. She felt herself playing with all her might to win; but not, as with his father, for flowers, trifling presents or mere glory; nay, for a very different stake: Life or Death!

She would do everything, anything to conquer him;

and yet, no—come what might—not everything. Sooner would she succumb than betray him as the thief or reveal what she had discovered in the viridarium. She had promised to keep the secret; and she would repay the father's kindness by screening the son from this disgrace. How beautiful, how noble had Orion's image been in her heart. She would not stain it with this disgrace in her own eyes and in those of the world. But every other reservation must be cast far, far away, to snatch the victory from him and to save Hiram. Every fair weapon she might use; only this treachery she could not, might not have recourse to. He must be made to feel that she was more magnanimous than he; that she, under all conceivable circumstances, kept her word. That was settled; her bosom once more rose and fell, and her eye brightened again; still it was some little time before she could find the right words with which to begin the contest.

Orion could see the seething turmoil in her soul; he felt that she was arming herself for resistance, and he longed to spur her on to deal the first blow. Not a word had she uttered of surprise or anger, not a syllable of reproach had passed her lips. What was she thinking of, what was she plotting? The more startling and dangerous the better; the more bravely she bore herself, the more completely in the background might he leave the painful sense of fighting against a woman. Even heroes had boasted of a victory over Amazons.

At last, at last! — She rose and went towards Hiram. He had been tied to the stake to which criminals were bound, and as an imploring glance from his honest eyes met hers, the spell that fettered her tongue was unloosed; she suddenly understood that she had not

merely to protect herself, but to fulfil a solemn duty. With a few rapid steps she went up to the table at which her judges sat in a semi-circle, and leaning on it with her left hand, raised her right high in the air, exclaiming :

“ You are the victims of a cruel fraud ; and I of an unparalleled and wicked trick, intended to bring me to ruin ! — Look at that man at the stake. Does he look like a robber ? A more honest and faithful servant never earned his freedom, and the gratitude Hiram owed to his master, my father, he has discharged to the daughter for whose sake he quitted his home, his wife and child. He followed me, an orphan, here into a strange land. — But that matters not to you. — Still, if you will hear the truth, the strict and whole. . . .”

“ Speak !” Orion put in ; but she went on, addressing herself exclusively to Nilus, and his peers, and ignoring him completely :

“ Your president, the son of the Mukaukas, knows that, instead of the accused, I might, if I chose, be the accuser. But I scorn it—for love of his father, and because I am more high-minded than he. He will understand ! — With regard to this particular emerald : Hiram, my freedman, took it out of its setting last evening, under my eyes, with his knife ; other persons besides us, thank God ! have seen the setting, empty, on the chain to which it belonged. This afternoon it was still in the place to which some criminal hand afterwards found access, and attached that gem instead. That I have just now seen for the first time — I swear it by Christ’s wounds. It is an exquisite work. Only a very rich man — the richest man here, can give away such a treasure, for whatever purpose he may have in

view — to destroy an enemy let us say. — Gamaliel,” and she turned to the Jew — “At what sum would you value that onyx?”

The Israelite asked to see the gem once more; he turned it about, and then said with a grin: “Well, fair lady, if my black hen laid me little things like that I would feed it on cakes from Arsinoe and oysters from Canopus. The stone is worth a landed estate, and though I am not a rich man, I would pay down two talents for it at any moment, even if I had to borrow the money.”

This statement could not fail to make a great impression on the judges. Orion, however, exclaimed: “Wonders on wonders mark this eventful day! The prodigal generosity which had become an empty name has revived again among us! Some lavish demon has turned a worthless plate of gold into a costly gem. — And may I ask who it was that saw the empty setting hanging to your chain?” Paula was in danger of forgetting even that last reserve she had imposed on herself; she answered with trembling accents:

“Apparently your confederates or you yourself did. You, and you alone, have any cause. . . .”

But he would not allow her to proceed. He abruptly interrupted her, exclaiming: “This is really too much! Oh, that you were a man! How far your generosity reaches I have already seen. Even hatred, the bitterest hostility. . . .”

“They would have every right to ruin you completely!” she cried, roused to the utmost. “And if I were to charge you with the most horrible crime. . . .”

“You yourself would be committing a crime, against me and against this house,” he said menacingly.

"Beware! Can self-delusion go so far that you dare to appeal to me to testify to the fable you have trumped up. . . ."

"No. Oh, no! That would be counting on some honesty in you yet," she loudly broke in. "I have other witnesses: "Mary, the granddaughter of the Mukaukas," and she tried to catch his eye.

"The child whose little heart you have won, and who follows you about like a pet dog!" he cried.

"And besides Mary, Katharina, the widow Susanah's daughter," she added, sure of her triumph, and the color mounted to her cheeks. "She is no longer a child, but a maiden grown, as you know. I therefore demand of you —" and she again turned to the assembly — "that you will fulfil your functions worthily and promote justice in my behalf by calling in both these witnesses and hearing their evidence."

On this Orion interposed with forced composure :

"As to whether a soft-hearted child ought to be exposed to the temptation to save the friend she absolutely worships by giving evidence before the judges, be it what it may, only her grandparents can decide. Her tender years would at any rate detract from the validity of her evidence, and I am averse to involving a child of this house in this dubious affair. With regard to Katharina, it is, on the contrary, the duty of this court to request her presence, and I offer myself to go and fetch her."

He resolutely resisted Paula's attempts to interrupt him again : she should have a patient hearing presently in the presence of her witness. The gem no doubt had come to her from her father. But at this her righteous

indignation was again too much for her; she cried out quite beside herself:

"No, and again no. Some reprobate scoundrel, an accomplice of yours — yes, I repeat it — made his way into my room while I was in the sick-room, and either forced the lock of my trunk or opened it with a false key."

"That can easily be proved," said Orion. In a confident tone he desired that the box should be placed on the table, and requested one of the council, who understood such matters, to give his opinion. Paula knew the man well. He was one of the most respected members of the household, the chief mechanic whose duty it was to test and repair the water-clocks, balances, measures and other instruments. He at once proceeded to examine the lock and found it in perfect order, though the key, which was of peculiar form, could certainly not have found a substitute in any false key; and Paula was forced to admit that she had left the trunk locked at noon and had worn the key round her neck ever since. Orion listened to his opinion with a shrug, and before going to seek Katharina gave orders that Paula and the nurse should be conducted to separate rooms. To arrive at any clear decision in this matter, it was necessary that any communication between these two should be rendered impossible. As soon as the door was shut on them he hastened into the garden, where he hoped to find Katharina.

The council looked after him with divided feelings. They were here confronted by riddles that were hard to solve. No one of them felt that he had a right to doubt the good intentions of their lord's son, whom they looked up to as a talented and high-minded youth. His dispute with Paula had struck them painfully, and

each one asked himself how it was that such a favorite with women should have failed to rouse any sentiment but that of hatred in one of the handsomest of her sex. The marked hostility she displayed to Orion injured her cause in the eyes of her judges, who knew only too well how unpleasant her relations were with Neforis. It was more than audacious in her to accuse the Mukaukas' son of having broken open her trunk; only hatred could have prompted her to utter such a charge. Still, there was something in her demeanor which encouraged confidence in her assertions, and if Katharina could really testify to having seen the empty medallion on the chain there would be no alternative but to begin the enquiry again from a fresh point of view, and to inculcate another robber. But who could have lavished such a treasure as this gem in exchange for mere rubbish? It was inconceivable; Ammonius the mechanician was right when he said that a woman full of hatred was capable of anything, even the incredible and impossible.

Meanwhile it was growing dusk and the scorching day had turned to the tempered heat of a glorious evening. The Mukaukas was still in his room while his wife with Susannah and her daughter, Mary and her governess, were enjoying the air and chatting in the open hall looking out on the garden and the Nile. The ladies had covered their heads with gauze veils as a protection against the mosquitoes, which were attracted in swarms from the river by the lights, and also against the mists that rose from the shallowing Nile; they were in the act of drinking some cooling fruit-syrup which had just been brought in, when Orion made his appearance.

"What has happened?" cried his mother in some anxiety, for she concluded from his dishevelled hair and heated cheeks that the meeting had gone anything rather than smoothly.

"Incredible things," he replied. "Paula fought like a lioness for her father's freedman. . ."

"Simply to annoy us and put us in a difficulty," replied Neforis.

"No, no, Mother," replied Orion with some warmth. "But she has a will of iron; a woman who never pauses at anything when she wants to carry her point; and at the same time she goes to work with a keen wit that is worthy of the greatest lawyer that I ever heard defend a cause in the high court of the capital. Besides this her air of superiority, and her divine beauty turn the heads of our poor household officers. It is fine and noble, of course, to be so zealous in the cause of a servant; but it can do no good, for the evidence against her stammering favorite is overwhelming, and when her last plea is demolished the matter is ended. She says that she showed a necklace to the child, and to you, charming Katharina."

"Showed it?" cried the young girl. "She took it away from us — did not she, Mary?"

"Well, we had taken it without her leave," replied the child.

"And she wants our children to appear in a court of justice to bear witness for her highness?" asked Neforis indignantly.

"Certainly," replied Orion. "But Mary's evidence is of no value in law. . ."

"And even if it were," replied his mother, "the

child should not be mixed up with this disgraceful business under any circumstances."

"Because I should speak for Paula!" cried Mary, springing up in great excitement.

"You will just hold your tongue," her grandmother exclaimed.

"And as for Katharina," said the widow, "I do not at all like the notion of her offering herself to be stared at by all those gentlemen."

"Gentlemen!" observed the girl. "Men — household officials and such like. They may wait long enough for me!"

"You must nevertheless do their bidding, haughty rosebud," said Orion laughing. "For you, thank God, are no longer a child, and a court of justice has the right of requiring the presence of every grown person as a witness. No harm will come to you, for you are under my protection. Come with me. We must learn every lesson in life. Resistance is vain. — Besides, all you will have to do will be to state what you have seen, and then, if I possibly can, I will bring you back under the tender escort of this arm, to your mother once more. You must entrust your jewel to me to-day, Susannah, and this trustworthy witness shall tell you afterwards how she fared under my care."

Katharina was quite capable of reading the implied meaning of these words, and she was not ill-pleased to be obliged to go off alone with the governor's handsome son, the first man for whom her little heart had beat quicker; she sprang up eagerly; but Mary clung to her arm, and insisted so vehemently and obstinately on being taken with them to bear witness in Paula's behalf, that her governess and Dame Neforis had the greatest difficulty

in reducing her to obedience and letting the pair go off without her. Both mothers looked after them with great satisfaction, and the governor's wife whispered to Susannah: "Before the judges to-day, but ere long, please God, before the altar at Church!"

To reach the hall of judgment they could go either through the house or round it. If the more circuitous route were chosen, it lay first through the garden; and this was the course taken by Orion. He had made a very great effort in the presence of the ladies to remain master of the agitation that possessed him; he saw that the battle he had begun, and from which he, at any rate, could not and would not now retire, was raging more and more fiercely, obliging him to drag the young creature who must become his wife—the die was already cast—into the course of crime he had started on.

When he had agreed with his mother that he was not to prefer his suit for Katharina till the following day, he had hoped to prove to her in the interval that this little thing was no wife for him; and now—oh! Irony of Fate—he found himself compelled to the very reverse of what he longed to do: to fight the woman he loved—Yes, still loved—as if she were his mortal foe, and pay his court to the girl who really did not suit him. It was maddening, but inevitable; and once more spurring himself with the word "Onwards!" he flung himself into the accomplishment of the unholy task of subduing the inexperienced child at his elbow into committing even a crime for his sake. His heart was beating wildly; but no pause, no retreat was possible: he must conquer. "Onwards, then, onwards!"

When they had passed out of the light of the lamps into the shade he took his young companion's slender

hand — thankful that the darkness concealed his features — and pressed the delicate fingers to his lips.

"Oh! — Orion!" she exclaimed shyly, but she did not resist.

"I only claim my due, sunshine of my soul!" he said insinuatingly. "If your heart beat as loud as mine, our mothers might hear them!"

"But it does!" she joyfully replied, her curly head bent on one side.

"Not as mine does," he said with a sigh, laying her little hand on his heart. He could do so in all confidence, for its spasmodic throbbing threatened to suffocate him.

"Yes indeed," she said. "It is beating. . ."

"So that they can hear it indoors," he added with a forced laugh. "Do you think your dear mother has not long since read our feelings?"

"Of course she has," whispered Katharina. "I have rarely seen her in such good spirits as since your return."

"And you, you little witch?"

"I? Of course I was glad — we all were. — And your parents!"

"Nay, nay, Katharina! What you yourself felt when we met once more, that is what I want to know."

"Oh, let that pass! How can I describe such a thing?"

"Is that quite impossible?" he asked and clasped her arm more closely in his own. He must win her over, and his romantic fancy helped him to paint feelings he had never had, in glowing colors. He poured out sweet words of love, and she was only too ready to believe them. At a sign from him she sat down con-

findingly on a wooden bench in the old avenue which led to the northern side of the house. Flowers were opening on many of the shrubs and shedding rich, oppressive perfume. The moonlight pierced through the solemn foliage of the sycamores, and shimmering streaks and rings of light played in the branches, on the trunks, and on the dark ground. The heat of the day still lingered in the leafy roofs overhead, sultry and heavy even now; and in this alley he called her for the first time his own, his betrothed, and enthralled her heart in chains and bonds. Each fervent word thrilled with the wild and painful agitation that was torturing his soul, and sounded heartfelt and sincere. The scent of flowers, too, intoxicated her young and inexperienced heart; she willingly offered her lips to his kisses, and with exquisite bliss felt the first glow of youthful love returned.

She could have lingered thus with him for a lifetime; but in a few minutes he sprang up, anxious to put an end to this tender dalliance which was beginning to be too much even for him, and exclaimed:

"This cursed, this infernal trial! But such is the fate of man! Duty calls, and he must return from all the bliss of Paradise to the world again. Give me your arm, my only love, my all!"

And Katharina obeyed. Dazzled and bewildered by the extraordinary happiness that had come to meet her, she allowed him to lead her on, listening with suspended breath as he added: "Out of this beatitude back to the sternest of duties! — And how odious, how immeasurably loathesome is the case in question! How gladly would I have been a friend to Paula, a faithful protector instead of a foe!"

As he spoke he felt the girl's left hand clench tighter

on his arm, and this spurred him on in his guilty purpose. Katharina herself had suggested to his mind the course he must pursue to attain his end. He went on to influence her jealousy by praising Paula's charm and loftiness, excusing himself in his own eyes by persuading himself that a lover was justified in inducing his betrothed to save his happiness and his honor.

Still, as he uttered each flattering word, he felt that he was lowering himself and doing a fresh injustice to Paula. He found it only too easy to sing her praises; but as he did so with growing enthusiasm Katharina hit him on the arm exclaiming, half in jest and half seriously vexed :

"Oh, she is a goddess! And pray do you love her or me? You had better not make me jealous! Do you hear?"

"You little simpleton!" he said gaily; and then he added soothingly: "She is like the cold moon, but you are the bright warming sun. Yes, Paula! — we will leave Paula to some Olympian god, some archangel. I rejoice in my gladsome little maiden who will enjoy life with me, and all its pleasures!"

"That we will!" she exclaimed triumphantly; the horizon of her future was radiant with sunshine.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed as if in surprise. "The lights are already shining in that miserable hall of justice! Ah, love, love! Under that enchantment we had forgotten the object for which we came out. — Tell me, my darling, do you remember exactly what the necklace was like that you and Mary were playing with this afternoon?"

"It was very finely wrought, but in the middle hung a rubbishy broken medallion of gold."

"You are a pretty judge of works of art! Then you overlooked the fine engraved gem which was set in that modest gold frame?"

"Certainly not."

"I assure you, little wise-head!"

"No, my dearest." As she spoke she looked up saucily, as though she had achieved some great triumph. "I know very well what gems are. My father left a very fine collection, and my mother says that by his will they are all to belong to my future husband."

"Then I can set you, my jewel, in a frame of the rarest gems."

"No, no," she cried gaily. "Let me have a setting indeed, for I am but a fugitive thing; but only, only in your heart."

"That piece of goldsmith's work is already done. — But seriously my child; with regard to Paula's necklace: it really was a gem, and you must have happened to see only the back of it. That is just as you describe it: a plain setting of gold."

"But Orion. . . ."

"If you love me, sweetheart, contradict me no further. In the future I will always accept your views, but in this case your mistake might involve us in a serious misunderstanding, by compelling me to give in to Paula and make her my ally. — Here we are! But wait one moment longer. — And once more, as to this gem. You see we may both be wrong — I as much as you; but I firmly believe that I am in the right. If you make a statement contrary to mine I shall appear before the judges as a liar. We are now betrothed — we are but one, wholly one; what damages or dignifies

one of us humiliates or elevates the other. If you, who love me—you, who, as it is already whispered, are soon to be the mistress of the governor's house—make a statement opposed to mine they are certain to believe it. You see, your whole nature is pure kindness, but you are still too young and innocent quite to understand all the duties of that omnipotent love which beareth and endureth all things. If you do not yield to me cheerfully in this case you certainly do not love me as you ought. And what is it to ask? I require nothing of you but that you should state before the court that you saw Paula's necklace at noon to-day, and that there was a gem hanging to it—a gem with Love and Psyche engraved on it."

"And I am to say that before all those men?" asked Katharina doubtfully.

"You must indeed, you kind little angel!" cried Orion tenderly. "And do you think it pretty in a betrothed bride to refuse her lover's first request so grudgingly, suspiciously, and ungraciously? Nay, nay. If there is the tiniest spark of love for me in your heart, if you do not want to see me reduced to implore Paula for mercy. . . ."

"But what is it all about? How can it matter so much to any one whether a gem or a mere plate of gold. . . .?"

"All that I will explain later," he hastily replied.

"Tell me now. . . ."

"Impossible. We have already put the patience of the judges to too severe a test. We have not a moment to lose."

"Very well then; but I shall die of confusion and shame if I have to make a declaration. . . ."

"Which is perfectly truthful, and by which you can prove to me that you love me," he urged.

"But it is dreadful!" she exclaimed anxiously. "At least fasten my veil closely over my face. — All those bearded men. . . ."

"Like the ostrich," said Orion, laughing as he complied. "If you really cannot agree with your. . . . What is it you called me just now? Say it again."

"My dearest!" she said shyly but tenderly.

She helped Orion to fold her veil twice over her face, and did not thrust him aside when he whispered in her ear: "Let us see if a kiss cannot be sweet even through all that wrapping! — Now, come. It will be all over in a few minutes."

He led the way into the anteroom to the great hall, begged her to wait a moment, and then went in and hastily informed the assembly that Dame Susannah had entrusted her daughter to him only on condition that he should escort her back again as soon as she had given her testimony. Then Paula was brought in and he desired her to be seated.

It was with a sinking and anxious heart that Katharina had entered the anteroom. She had screened herself from a scolding before now by trivial subterfuges, but never had told a serious lie; and every instinct rebelled against the demand that she should now state a direct falsehood. But could Orion, the noblest of mankind, the idol of the whole town, so pressingly entreat her to do anything that was wrong? Did not love — as he had said — make it her duty to do everything that might screen him from loss or injury? It did not seem to her to be quite as it should be, but perhaps she did not altogether understand the matter;

she was so young and inexperienced. She hated the idea, too, that, if she opposed her lover, he would have to come to terms with Paula. She had no lack of self-possession, and she told herself that she might hold her own with any girl in Memphis; still, she felt the superiority of the handsome, tall, proud Syrian, nor could she forget how, the day before yesterday, when Paula had been walking up and down the garden with Orion the chief officer of Memphis had exclaimed: "What a wonderfully handsome couple!" She herself had often thought that no more beautiful, elegant and lovable creature than Thomas' daughter walked the earth; she had longed and watched for a glance or a kind word from her. But since hearing those words a bitter feeling had possessed her soul against Paula, and there had been much to foster it. Paula always treated her like a child instead of a grown-up girl, as she was. Why, that very morning, had she sought out her betrothed—for she might call him so now—and tried to keep her away from him? And how was it that Orion, even while declaring his love for her, had spoken more than warmly—enthusiastically of Paula? She must be on her guard, and though others should speak of the great good fortune that had fallen to her lot, Paula, at any rate, would not rejoice in it, for Katharina felt and knew that she was not indifferent to Orion. She had not another enemy in the world, but Paula was one; her love had everything to fear from her—and suddenly she asked herself whether the gold medallion she had seen might not indeed have been a gem? Had she examined the necklace closely, even for a moment? And why should she fancy she had sharper sight than Orion with his large, splendid eyes?

He was right, as he always was. Most engraved gems were oval in form, and the pendant which she had seen and was to give evidence about, was undoubtedly oval. Then it was not like Orion to require a falsehood of her. In any case it was her duty to her betrothed to preserve from evil, and prevent him from concluding any alliance with that false Siren. She knew what she had to say; and she was about to loosen a portion of her veil from her face that she might look Paula steadfastly in the eyes, when Orion came back to fetch her into the hall where the Court was sitting. To his delight—nay almost to his astonishment—she stated with perfect confidence that a gem had been hanging to Paula's necklace at noon that day; and when the onyx was shown her and she was asked if she remembered the stone, she calmly replied:

"It may or it may not be the same; I only remember the oval gold back to it: besides I was only allowed to have the necklace in my hands for a very short time."

When Nilus, the treasurer, desired her to look more closely at the figures of Eros and Psyche to refresh her memory, she evaded it by saying: "I do not like such heathen images: we Jacobite maidens wear different adornments."

At this Paula rose and stepped towards her with a look of stern reproof; little Katharina was glad now that it had occurred to her to cover her face with a double veil. But the utter confusion she felt under the Syrian girl's gaze did not last long. Paula exclaimed reproachfully: "You speak of your faith. Like mine, it requires you to respect the truth. Consider how much depends on your declaration; I implore you, child. . ."

But the girl interrupted her rival exclaiming with much irritation and vehement excitement :

"I am no longer a child, not even as compared with you ; and I think before I speak, as I was taught to do."

She threw back her little head with a confident air, and said very decidedly :

"That onyx hung to the middle of the chain."

"How dare you, you audacious hussy !" It was Perpetua, quite unable to contain herself, who flung the words in her face. Katharina started as though an asp had stung her and turned round on the woman who had dared to insult her so grossly and so boldly. She was on the verge of tears as she looked helplessly about her for a defender ; but she had not long to wait, for Orion instantly gave orders that Perpetua should be imprisoned for bearing false witness. Paula, however, as she had not perjured herself, but had merely invented an impossible tale with a good motive, was dismissed, and her chest was to be replaced in her room.

At this Paula once more stepped forth ; she unhooked the onyx from the chain and flung it towards Gamaliel, who caught it, while she exclaimed :

"I make you a present of it, Jew ! Perhaps the villain who hung it to my chain may buy it back again. The chain was given to my great-grandmother by the saintly Theodosius, and rather than defile it by contact with that gift from a villain, I will throw it into the Nile ! — You — you, poor, deluded judges — I cannot be wroth with you, but I pity you ! — My Hiram. . . ." and she looked at the freedman, "is an honest soul whom I shall remember with gratitude to my dying day ; but as to that unrighteous son of a most righteous

father, that man. . ." and she raised her voice, while she pointed straight at Orion's face; but the young man interrupted her with a loud :

"Enough!"

She tried to control herself and replied :

"I will submit. Your conscience will tell you a hundred times over what I need not say. One last word. . ." She went close up to him and said in his ear :

"I have been able to refrain from using my deadliest weapon against you for the sake of keeping my word. Now you, if you are not the basest wretch living, keep yours, and save Hiram."

His only reply was an assenting nod ; Paula paused on the threshold and, turning to Katharina, she added :

"You, child — for you are but a child — with what nameless suffering will not the son of the Mukaukas repay you for the service you have rendered him!"

Then she left the room. Her knees trembled under her as she mounted the stairs, but when she had again taken her place by the side of the hapless, crazy girl a merciful God granted her the relief of tears. Her friend saw her and left her to weep undisturbed, till she herself called him and confided to him all she had gone through in the course of this miserable day.

Orion and Katharina had lost their good spirits ; they went back to the colonnade in a dejected mood. On the way she pressed him to explain to her why he had insisted on her making this declaration, but he put her off till the morrow. They found Susannah alone, for his mother had been sent for by her husband, who was suffering more than usual, and she had taken Mary with her.

After bidding the widow good-night and escorting her to her chariot, he returned to the hall where the Court was still sitting. There he recapitulated the case as it now stood, and all the evidence against the freed-man. The verdict was then pronounced: Hiram was condemned to death with but one dissentient voice: that of Nilus the treasurer.

Orion ordered that the execution of the sentence should be postponed; he did not go back into the house, however, but had his most spirited horse saddled and rode off alone into the desert. He had won, but he felt as though in this race he had rushed into a morass and must be choked in it.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAULA's report of the day's proceedings, of Orion's behavior, and of the results of the trial angered the leech beyond measure; he vehemently approved the girl's determination to quit this cave of robbers, this house of wickedness, of treachery, of imbecile judges and false witnesses, as soon as possible. But she had no opportunity for a quiet conversation with him, for Philippus soon had his hands full in the care of the sufferers.

Rustem, the Masdakite, who till now had been lying unconscious, had been roused from his lethargy by some change of treatment, and loudly called for his master Haschim. When the Arab did not appear, and it was explained to him that he could not hope to see him before the morning, the young giant sat up among his

pillows, propping himself on his arms set firmly against the couch behind him, looked about him with a wandering gaze, and shook his big head like an aggrieved lion — but that his thick mane of hair had been cut off — abusing the physician all the time in his native tongue, and in a deep, rolling, bass voice that rang through the rooms though no one understood a word. Philippus, quite undaunted, was trying to adjust the bandage over his wound, when Rustem suddenly flung his arms round his body and tried with all his might, and with foaming lips, to drag him down. He clung to his antagonist, roaring like a wild beast; even now Philippus never for an instant lost his presence of mind but desired the nun to fetch two strong slaves. The Sister hurried away, and Paula remained the eye-witness of a fearful struggle. The physician had twisted his ancles round those of the stalwart Persian, and putting forth a degree of strength which could hardly have been looked for in a stooping student, tall and large-boned as he was, he wrenched the Persian's hands from his hips, pressed his fingers between those of Rustem, forced him back on to his pillows, set his knees against the brazen frame of the couch, and so effectually held him down that he could not sit up again. Rustem exerted every muscle to shake off his opponent; but the leech was the stronger, for the Masdakite was weakened by fever and loss of blood. Paula watched this contest between intelligent force and the animal strength of a raving giant with a beating heart, trembling in every limb. She could not help her friend, but she followed his every movement as she stood at the head of the bed; and as he held down the powerful creature before whom her frail uncle had cowered in abject terror, she could

not help admiring his manly beauty ; for his eyes sparkled with unwonted fire, and the mean chin seemed to lengthen with the frightful effort he was putting forth, and so to be brought into proportion with his wide forehead and the rest of his features. Her spirit quaked for him ; she fancied she could see something great and heroic in the man, in whom she had hitherto discovered no merit but his superior intellect.

The struggle had lasted some minutes before Philip felt the man's arms grow limp, and he called to Paula to bring him a sheet — a rope — what not — to bind the raving man. She flew into the next room, quite collected ; fetched her headkerchief, snatched off the silken girdle that bound her waist, rushed back and helped the leech to tie the maniac's hands. She understood her friend's least word, or a movement of his finger ; and when the slaves whom the nun had fetched came into the room, they found Rustem with his hands firmly bound, and had only to prevent him from leaping out of bed or throwing himself over the edge. Philippus, quite out of breath, explained to the slaves how they were to act, and when he opened his medicine-chest Paula noticed that his swollen, purple fingers were trembling. She took out the phial to which he pointed, mixed the draught according to his orders, and was not afraid to pour it between the teeth of the raving man, forcing them open with the help of the slaves.

The soothing medicine calmed him in a few minutes, and the leech himself could presently wash the wound and apply a fresh dressing with the practised aid of the Sister.

Meanwhile the crazy girl had been waked by the ravings of the Persian, and was anxiously enquiring if

the dog — the dreadful dog — was there. But she soon allowed herself to be quieted by Paula, and she answered the questions put to her so rationally and gently, that her nurse called the physician who could confirm Paula in her hope that a favorable change had taken place in her mental condition. Her words were melancholy and mild; and when Paula remarked on this Philippus observed :

“It is on the bed of sickness that we learn to know our fellow-creatures. The frantic girl, who perhaps fell on the son of this house with murderous intent, now reveals her true, sweet nature. And as for that poor fellow, he is a powerful creature, an honest one too; I would stake my ten fingers on it!”

“What makes you so sure of that?”

“Even in his delirium he did not once scratch or bite, but only defended himself like a man. — Thank you, now, for your assistance. If you had not flung the cord round his hands, the game might have ended very differently.”

“Surely not!” exclaimed Paula decidedly. “How strong you are, Philip. I feel quite alarmed!”

“You?” said the leech laughing. “On the contrary, you need never be alarmed again now that you have seen by chance that your champion is no weakling. — Pfooh! I shall be glad now of a little rest.”

She offered him her handkerchief, and while he thankfully used it to wipe his brow — controlling with much difficulty the impulse to press it to his lips, he added lightly :

“With such an assistant everything must go well. There is no merit in being strong; every one can be strong who comes into the world with healthy blood

and well-knit bones, who keeps all his limbs well exercised, as I did in my youth, and who does not destroy his inheritance by dissipated living. — However, I still feel the struggle in my hands; but there is some good wine in the next room yet, and two or three cups of it will do me good." They went together into the adjoining room where, by this time, most of the lamps were extinguished. Paula poured out the wine, touched the goblet with her lips, and he emptied it at a draught; but he was not to be allowed to drink off a second, for he had scarcely raised it, when they heard voices in the Masdakite's room, and Neforis came in. The governor's careful wife had not quitted her husband's couch — even Rustem's storming had not induced her to leave her post; but when she was informed by the slaves what had been going on, and that Paula was still up-stairs with the leech, she had come to the strangers' rooms as soon as her husband could spare her to speak to Philippus, to represent to Paula what the proprieties required, and to find out what the strange noises could be which still seemed to fill the house — at this hour usually as silent as the grave. They proceeded from the sick-rooms, but also from Orion, who had just come in, and from Nilus the treasurer, who had been called by the former into his room, though the night was fast drawing on to morning. To the governor's wife everything seemed ominous at the close of this terrible day, marked in the calendar as unlucky; so she made her way up-stairs, escorted by her husband's night watcher, and holding in her hand a small reliquary to which she ascribed the power of banning vile spirits.

She came into the sick-room swiftly and noiselessly,

put the nun through a strict cross-examination with the fretful sharpness of a person disturbed in her night's rest. Then she went into the sitting-room where Philippus was on the point of pledging Paula in his second cup of wine, while she stood before him with dishevelled hair and robe ungirt. All this was an offence against good manners such as she would not suffer in her house, and she stoutly ordered her husband's niece to go to bed. After all the offences that had been pardoned her this day — no, yesterday — she exclaimed, it would have been more becoming in the girl to examine herself in silence, in her own room, to exorcise the lying spirits which had her in their power, and implore her Saviour for forgiveness, than to pretend to be nursing the sick while she was carrying on, with a young man, an orgy which, as the Sister had just told her, had lasted since mid-day.

Paula spoke not a word, though the color changed in her face more than once as she listened to this speech. But when Neforis finally pointed to the door, she said, with all the cold pride she had at her command when she was the object of unworthy suspicions:

"Your aim is easily seen through. I should scorn to reply, but that you are the wife of the man who, till you set him against me, was glad to call himself my friend and protector, and who is also related to me. As usual, you attribute to me an unworthy motive. In showing me the door of this room consecrated by suffering, you are turning me out of your house, which you and your son — for I must say it for once — have made a hell to me."

"I — I! And my — No! this is indeed —" ex-

claimed the matron in panting rage. She clasped her hands over her heaving bosom and her pale face was dyed crimson, while her eyes flashed wrathful lightnings. "That is too much; a thousand times too much — a thousand times — do you hear? — And I — I condescend to answer you! We picked her up in the street, and have treated her like a daughter, spent enormous sums on her, and now. . . ."

This was addressed to the leech rather than to Paula; but she took up the gauntlet and replied in a tone of unqualified scorn:

"And now I plainly declare, as a woman of full age, free to dispose of myself, that to-morrow morning I leave this house with everything that belongs to me, even if I should go as a beggar; — this house, where I have been grossly insulted, where I and my faithful servant have been falsely condemned, and where he is even now about to be murdered."

"And where you have been dealt with far too mildly," Neforis shrieked at her audacious antagonist, "and preserved from sharing the fate of the robber you smuggled into the house. To save a criminal — it is unheard of: — you dared to accuse the son of your benefactor of being a corrupt judge."

"And so he is," exclaimed Paula furious. "And what is more, he has inveigled the child whom you destine to be his wife into bearing false witness. More — much more could I say, but that, even if I did not respect the mother, your husband has deserved that I should spare him."

"Spare him — spare!" cried Neforis contemptuously. "You — you will spare us! The accused will be merciful and spare the judge! But you shall be made to

“speak; — aye, made to speak! And as to what you, a slanderer, can say about false witness. . .”

“Your own granddaughter,” interrupted the leech, “will be compelled to repeat it before all the world, noble lady, if you do not moderate yourself.”

Neforis laughed hysterically.

“So that is the way the wind blows!” she exclaimed, quite beside herself. “The sick-room is a temple of Bacchus and Venus; and this disgraceful conduct is not enough, but you must conspire to heap shame and disgrace on this righteous house and its masters.”

Then, resting her left hand which held the reliquary on her hip, she added with hasty vehemence:

“So be it. Go away; go wherever you please! If I find you under this roof to-morrow at noon, you thankless, wicked girl, I will have you turned out into the streets by the guard. I hate you — for once I will ease my poor, tormented heart — I loathe you; your very existence is an offence to me and brings misfortune on me and on all of us; and besides — besides, I should prefer to keep the emeralds we have left.”

This last and cruelest taunt, which she had brought out against her better feelings, seemed to have relieved her soul of a hundred-weight of care; she drew a deep breath, and turning to Philippus, went on far more quietly and rationally:

“As for you, Philip, my husband needs you. You know well what we have offered you and you know George’s liberal hand. Perhaps you will think better of it, and will learn to perceive. . .”

“I! . . .” said the leech with a lofty smile. “Do you really know me so little? Your husband, I am

ready to admit, stands high in my esteem, and when he wants me he will no doubt send for me. But never again will I cross this threshold uninvited, or enter a house where right is trodden underfoot, where defenceless innocence is insulted and abandoned to despair. You may stare in astonishment! Your son has desecrated his father's judgment-seat, and the blood of guiltless Hiram is on his head. — You — well, you may still cling to your emeralds. Paula will not touch them; she is too high-souled to tell you who it is that you would indeed do well to lock up in the deepest dungeon-cell! What I have heard from your lips breaks every tie that time had knit between us. I do not demand that my friends should be wealthy, that they should have any attractions or charm, any special gifts of mind or body; but we must meet on common ground: that of honorable feeling. That you did not bring into the world, or you have lost it; and from this hour I am a stranger to you and never wish to see you again, excepting by the side of your husband when he requires me."

He spoke the last words with such immeasurable dignity that Neforis was startled and bereft of all self-control. She had been treated as a wretch worthy of utter scorn by a man beneath her in rank, but whom she always regarded as one of the most honest, frank and pure-minded she had ever known; a man indispensable to her husband, because he knew how to mitigate his sufferings, and could restrain him from the abuse of his narcotic anodyne. He was the only physician of repute, far and wide. She was to be deprived of the services of this valuable ally, to whom little Mary and many of the household owed their lives, by this Syrian

girl; and she herself, sure that she was a good and capable wife and mother, was to stand there like a thing despised and avoided by every honest man, through this evil genius of her house!

It was too much. Tortured by rage, vexation, and sincere distress, she said in a complaining voice, while the tears started to her eyes:

“But what is the meaning of all this? You, who know me, who have seen me ruling and caring for my family, you turn your back upon me in my own house and point the finger at me? Have I not always been a faithful wife, nursing my husband for years and never leaving his sick-bed, never thinking of anything but how to ease his pain? I have lived like a recluse from sheer sense of duty and faithful love, while other wives, who have less means than I, live in state and go to entertainments. — And whose slaves are better kept and more often freed than ours? Where is the beggar so sure of an alms as in our house, where I, and I alone, uphold piety? — And now am I so fallen that the sun may not shine on me, and that a worthy man like you should withdraw his friendship all in a moment, and for the sake of this ungrateful, loveless creature — because, because, what did you call it — because the mind is wanting in me — or what did you call it that I must have before you . . . ?”

“It is called feeling,” interrupted the leech, who was sorry for the unhappy woman, in whom he knew there was much that was good. “Is the word quite new to you, my lady Neforis? — It is born with us; but a firm will can elevate the least noble feeling, and the best that nature can bestow will deteriorate through self-indulgence. But, in the day of judgment, if I am not

very much mistaken, it is not our acts but our feeling that will be weighed. It would ill-become me to blame you, but I may be allowed to pity you, for I see the disease in your soul which, like gangrene in the body. . ."

"What next!" cried Neforis.

"This disease," the physician calmly went on — "I mean hatred, should be far indeed from so pious a Christian. It has stolen into your heart like a thief in the night, has eaten you up, has made bad blood, and led you to treat this heavily-afflicted orphan as though you were to put stocks and stones in the path of a blind man to make him fall. If, as it would seem, my opinion still weighs with you a little, before Paula leaves your house you will ask her pardon for the hatred with which you have persecuted her for years, which has now led you to add an intolerable insult — in which you yourself do not believe — to all the rest."

At this Paula, who had been watching the physician all through his speech, turned to Dame Neforis, and unclasped her hands which were lying in her lap, ready to shake hands with her uncle's wife if she only offered hers, though she was still fully resolved to leave the house.

A terrible storm was raging in the lady's soul. She felt that she had often been unkind to Paula. That a painful doubt still obscured the question as to who had stolen the emerald she had unwillingly confessed before she had come up here. She knew that she would be doing her husband a great service by inducing the girl to remain, and she would only too gladly have kept the leech in the house; — but then how deeply had she, and her son, been humiliated by this haughty creature!

Should she humble herself to her, a woman so much younger, offer her hand, make. . .

At this moment they heard the tinkle of the silver bowl, into which her husband threw a little ball when he wanted her. His pale, suffering face rose before her inward eye, she could hear him asking for his opponent at draughts, she could see his sad, reproachful gaze when she told him to-morrow that she, Neforis, had driven his niece, the daughter of the noble Thomas, out of the house; with a swift impulse she went towards Paula, grasping the reliquary in her left hand and holding out her right, and said in a low voice.

"Shake hands, girl. I often ought to have behaved differently to you; but why have you never in the smallest thing sought my love? God is my witness that at first I was fully disposed to regard you as a daughter, but you — well, let it pass. I am sorry now that I should — if I have distressed you."

At the first words Paula had platted her hand in that of Neforis. Hers was as cold as marble, the elder woman's was hot and moist; it seemed as though their hands were typical of the repugnance of their hearts. They both felt it so, and their clasp was but a brief one. When Paula withdrew hers, she preserved her composure better than the governor's wife, and said quite calmly, though her cheeks were burning:

"Then we will try to part without any ill-will, and I thank you for having made that possible. To-morrow morning I hope I may be permitted to take leave of my uncle in peace, for I love him; and of little Mary."

"But you need not go now! On the contrary, I urgently request you to stay," Neforis eagerly put in.

"George will not let you leave. You yourself know how fond he is of you."

"He has often been as a father to me," said Paula, and even her eyes shone through tears. "I would gladly have stayed with him till the end. Still, it is fixed — I must go."

"And if your uncle adds his entreaties to mine?"

"It will be in vain."

Neforis took the maiden's hand in her own again, and tried with genuine anxiety to persuade her; but Paula was firm. She adhered to her determination to leave the governor's house in the morning.

"But where will you find a suitable house?" cried Neforis. "A residence that will be fit for you?"

"That shall be my business," replied the physician. "Believe me, noble lady, it would be best for all that Paula should seek another home. But it is to be hoped that she may decide on remaining in Memphis."

At this Neforis exclaimed:

"Here, with us, is her natural home! — Perhaps God may turn your heart for your uncle's sake, and we may begin a new and happier life." Paula's only reply was a shake of the head; but Neforis did not see it: the metal tinkle sounded for the third time, and it was her duty to respond to its call.

As soon as she had left the room Paula drew a deep breath, exclaiming:

"O God! O God! How hard it was to refrain from flinging in her teeth the crime her wicked son. . . . No, no; nothing should have made me do that. But I cannot tell you how the mere sight of that woman angers me, how light-hearted I feel since I have broken

down the bridge that connected me with this house and with Memphis."

"With Memphis?" asked Philippus.

"Yes," said Paula gladly. "I go away — away from hence, out of the vicinity of this woman and her son! — Whither? Oh! back to Syria, or to Greece — every road is the right one, if it only takes me away from this place."

"And I, your friend?" asked Philippus.

"I shall bear the remembrance of you in a grateful heart."

The physician smiled, as though something had happened just as he expected; after a moment's reflection he said:

"And where can the Nabathæan find you, if indeed he discovers your father in the hermit of Sinai?"

The question startled and surprised Paula, and Philippus now adduced every argument to convince her that it was necessary that she should remain in the City of the Pyramids. In the first place she must liberate her nurse — in this he could promise to help her — and everything he said was so judicious in its bearing on the circumstances that had to be reckoned with, and the facts actual or possible, that she was astonished at the practical good sense of this man, with whom she had generally talked only of matters apart from this world. Finally she yielded, chiefly for the sake of her father and Perpetua; but partly in the hope of still enjoying his society. She would remain in Memphis, at any rate for the present, under the roof of a friend of the physician's — long known to her by report — a Melchite like herself, and there await the further development of her fate.

To be away from Orion and never, never to see him again was her heartfelt wish. All places were the same to her where she had no fear of meeting him. She hated him; still she knew that her heart would have no peace so long as such a meeting was possible. Still, she longed to free herself from a desire to see what his further career would be, which came over her again and again with overwhelming and terrible power. For that reason, and for that only, she longed to go far, far away, and she was hardly satisfied by the leech's assurance that her new protector would be able to keep away all visitors whom she might not wish to receive. And he himself, he added, would make it his business to stand between her and all intruders the moment she sent for him.

They did not part till the sun was rising above the eastern hills; as they separated Paula said:

"So this morning a new life begins for me, which I can well imagine will, by your help, be pleasanter than that which is past."

And Philippus replied with happy emotion:

"The new life for me began yesterday."

CHAPTER XIV.

BETWEEN morning and noon Mary was sitting on a low cane seat under the sycamores which yesterday had shaded Katharina's brief young happiness; by her side was her governess Eudoxia, under whose superintendence she was writing out the Ten Commandments from a Greek catechism.

The teacher had been lulled to sleep by the increasing heat and the pervading scent of flowers, and her pupil had ceased to write. Her eyes, red with tears, were fixed on the shells with which the path was strewn, and she was using her long ruler, at first to stir them about, and then to write the words "Paula," and "Paula, Mary's darling," in large capital letters. Now and again a butterfly, following the motion of the rod, brought a smile to her pretty little face from which the dark spirit "Trouble" had not wholly succeeded in banishing gladness. Still, her heart was heavy. Everything around her, in the garden and in the house, was still; for her grandfather's state had become seriously worse at sunrise, and every sound must be hushed. Mary was thinking of the poor sufferer: what pain he had to bear, and how the parting from Paula would grieve him, when Katharina came towards her down the path.

The young girl did little credit to-day to her nickname of "the water-wagtail;" her little feet shuffled through the shelly gravel, her head hung wearily, and when one of the myriad insects, that were busy in the morning sunshine, came within her reach she beat it away angrily with her fan. As she came up to Mary she greeted her with the usual "All hail!" but the child only nodded in response, and half turning her back went on with her inscription.

Katharina, however, paid no heed to this cool reception, but said in sympathetic tones:

"Your poor grandfather is not so well, I hear?"

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

"They say he is very dangerously ill. I saw Philip himself."

"Indeed?" said Mary without looking up, and she went on writing.

"Orion is with him," Katharina went on. "And Paula is really going away?"

The child nodded dumbly, and her eyes again filled with tears.

Katharina now observed how sad the little girl was looking, and that she intentionally refused to answer her. At any other time she would not have troubled herself about this, but to-day this taciturnity provoked her, nay it really worried her; she stood straight in front of Mary, who was still indefatigably busy with the ruler, and said loudly and with some irritation:

"I have fallen into disgrace with you, it would seem, since yesterday. Every one to his liking; but I will not put up with such bad manners, I can tell you!"

The last words were spoken loud enough to wake Eudoxia, who heard them, and drawing herself up with dignity she said severely:

"Is that the way to behave to a kind and welcome visitor, Mary?"

"I do not see one," retorted the child with a determined pout.

"But I do," cried the governess. "You are behaving like a little barbarian, not like a little girl who has been taught Greek manners. Katharina is no longer a child, though she is still often kind enough to play with you. Go to her at once and beg her pardon for being so rude."

"I!" exclaimed Mary, and her tone conveyed the most positive refusal to obey this behest. She sprang to her feet, and with flashing eyes, she cried: "We are not Greeks, neither she nor I, and I can tell you

once for all that she is not my kind and welcome visitor, nor my friend any more ! We have nothing, nothing whatever to do with each other any more !”

“Are you gone mad ?” cried Eudoxia, and her long face assumed a threatening expression, while she rose from her easy-chair in spite of the increasing heat, intending to capture her pupil and compel her to apologize; but Mary was more nimble than the middle-aged damsel and fled down the alley towards the river, as nimble as a gazelle.

Eudoxia began to run after her; but the heat was soon too much for her, and when she stopped, exhausted and panting, she perceived that Katharina, worthy once more of her name of “water-wagtail,” had flown past her and was chasing the little girl at a pace that she shuddered to contemplate. Mary soon saw that no one but Katharina was in pursuit; she moderated her pace, and awaited her cast-off friend under the shade of a tall shrub. In a moment Katharina was facing her; with a heightened color she seized both her hands and exclaimed passionately :

“What was it you said ? You—you — If I did not know what a wrong-headed little simpleton you were, I could. . . .”

“You could accuse me falsely ! — But now, leave go of my hands or I will bite you. And as Katharina, at this threat, released her she went on vehemently. “Oh ! I know you now — since yesterday ! And I tell you, once for all, I say thank you for nothing for such friends. You ought to sink into the earth for shame of the sin you have committed. I am only ten years old, but rather than have done such a thing I would have let myself be shut up in that hot hole with poor, inno-

cent Perpetua, or I would have let myself be killed, as you want poor, honest Hiram to be! Oh, shame!"

Katharina's crimson cheeks had turned pale at this address and, as she had no answer ready, she could only toss her head and say, with as much pride and dignity as she could assume:

"What can a child like you know about things that puzzle the heads of grown-up people?"

"Grown-up people!" laughed Mary, who was not three inches shorter than her antagonist. "You must be a great deal taller before I call you grown up! In two years time, you will scarcely be up to my eyes."

At this the irascible Egyptian fired up; she gave the child a slap in the face with the palm of her hand, Mary only stood still as if petrified, and after gazing at the ground for a minute or two without a cry, she turned her back on her companion and silently went back into the shaded walk.

Katharina watched her with tears in her eyes. She felt that Mary was justified in disapproving of what she had done the day before; for she herself had been unable to sleep and had become more and more convinced that she had acted wrongly, nay, unpardonably. And now again she had done an inexcusable thing. She felt that she had deeply hurt the child's feelings, and this sincerely grieved her. She followed Mary in silence, at some little distance, like a maid-servant. She longed to hold her back by her dress, to say something kind to her, nay, to ask her pardon. As they drew near to the spot where the governess had dropped into her chair again, a hapless victim to the heat of Egypt, Katharina called Mary by her name, and when the child paid no heed, laid her hand on her shoulder,

saying in gentle entreaty: "Forgive me for having so far forgotten myself. But how can I help being so little? You know very well when any one laughs at me for it. . . ."

"You get angry and slap!" retorted the child, walking on. "Yesterday, perhaps, I might have laughed over a box on the ear—it is not the first—or have given it to you back again; but to-day! — Just now," and she shuddered involuntarily, "just now I felt as if some black slave had laid his dirty hand on my cheek. You are not what you were. You walk quite differently, and you look—depend upon it you do not look as nice and as bright as you used, and I know why: You did a very bad thing last evening."

"But dear pet," said the other, "you must not be so hard. Perhaps I did not really tell the judges everything I knew, but Orion, who loves me so, and whose wife I am to be. . . ."

"He led you into sin! — Yes; and he was always merry and kind till yesterday; but since — Oh, that unlucky day!"

Here she was interrupted by Eudoxia, who poured out a flood of reproaches and finally desired her to resume her task. The child obeyed unresistingly; but she had scarcely settled to her wax tablets again when Katharina was by her side, whispering to her that Orion would certainly not have asserted anything that he did not believe to be true, and that she had really been in doubt as to whether a gem with a gold back, or a mere gold frame-work, had been hanging to Paula's chain. At this Mary turned sharply and quickly upon her, looked her straight in the eyes and exclaimed — but in Egyptian that the governess might not under-

stand, for she had disdained to learn a single word of it:

"A rubbishy gold frame with a broken edge was hanging to the chain, and, what is more, it caught in your dress. Why, I can see it now! And, when you bore witness that it was a gem, you told a lie. — Look here; here are the laws which God Almighty himself gave on the sacred Mount of Sinai, and there it stands written: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.' And those who do, the priest told me, are guilty of mortal sin, for which there is no forgiveness on earth or in Heaven, unless after bitter repentance and our Saviour's special mercy. So it is written; and you could actually declare before the judges a thing that was false, and that you knew would bring others to ruin?"

The young criminal looked down in shame and confusion, and answered hesitatingly:

"Orion asserted it so positively and clearly, and then — I do not know what came over me — but I was so angry, so — I could have murdered her!"

"Whom?" asked Mary in surprise.

"You know very well: Paula."

"Paula!" said Mary, and her large eyes again filled with tears. "Is it possible? Did you not love her as much as I do? Have not you often and often clung about her like a bur?"

"Yes, yes, very true. But before the judges she was so intolerably proud, and then. — But believe me, Mary, you really and truly cannot understand anything of all this."

"Can I not?" asked the child folding her arms. "Why do you think me so stupid?" "You are in love

with Orion — and he is a man whom few can match, — over head and ears in love; and because Paula looks like a queen by the side of you, and is so much handsomer and taller than you are, and Orion, till yesterday — I could see it all — cared a thousand times more for her than for you, you were jealous and envious of her. Oh, I know all about it. — And I know that all the women fall in love with him, and that Mandane had her ears cut off on his account, and that it was a lady who loved him in Constantinople that gave him the little white dog. The slave-girls tell me what they hear and what I like. — And after all, you may well be jealous of Paula, for if she only made a point of it, how soon Orion would make up his mind never to look at you again! She is the handsomest and the wisest and the best girl in the whole world, and why should she not be proud? The false witness you bore will cost poor Hiram his life; but the merciful Saviour may forgive you at last. It is your affair, and no concern of mine; but when Paula is forced to leave the house and all through you, so that I shall never, never, never see her any more — I cannot forget it, and I do not think I ever shall; but I will pray God to make me.”

She burst into loud sobs, and the governess had started up to put an end to a dialogue which she could not understand, and which was therefore vexatious and provoking, when the water-wagtail fell on her knees before the little girl, threw her arms round her, and bursting into tears, exclaimed:

“ Mary — darling little Mary* forgive me. Oh, if you

* The German has the diminutive *Mariechen*. To this Dr. Ebers appends this note. “ An ignorant critic took exception to the use of Vol. I.

could but know what I endured before I came out here ! Forgive me, Mary ; be my sweet, dear little Mary once more. Indeed and indeed you are much better than I am. Merciful Saviour, what possessed me last evening ? And all through him, through the man no one can help loving — through Orion ! — And would you believe it : I do not even know why he led me into this sin. But I must try to care for him no more, to forget him entirely, although, although, — only think, he called me his betrothed ; but now that he has betrayed me into sin, can I dare to become his wife ? It has given me no peace all night. I love him, yes I love him, you cannot think how dearly ; still, I cannot be his ! Sooner will I go into a convent, or drown myself in the Nile ! — And I will say all this to my mother, this very day."

The Greek governess had looked on in astonishment, for it was indeed strange to see the young girl kneeling in front of the child. She listened to her eager flow of unintelligible words, wondering whether she could ever teach her pupil — with her grandmother's help if need should be — to cultivate a more sedate and Greek demeanor.

At this juncture Paula came down the path. Some slaves followed her, carrying several boxes and bundles and a large litter, all making their way to the Nile, where a boat was waiting to ferry her up the river to her new home.

As she lingered unobserved, her eye rested on the diminutive form of names (as for instance *Irenchen*, little Irene) in 'The Sisters,' as an anachronism. It is nevertheless a fact that the Greeks settled in Egypt were so fond of using the diminutive form of woman's names that they preferred them, even in the tax-rolls. This form was common in Attic Greek."

touching picture of the two young things clasped in each other's arms, and she overheard the last words of the gentle little creature who had done her such a cruel wrong. She could only guess at what had occurred, but she did not like to be a listener, so she called Mary; and when the child started up and flew to throw her arms round her neck with vehement and devoted tenderness, she covered her little face and hair with kisses. Then she freed herself from the little girl's embrace, and said, with tearful eyes:

"Good-bye, my darling! In a few minutes I shall no longer belong here; another and a strange home must be mine. Love me always, and do not forget me, and be quite sure of one thing: you have no truer friend on earth than I am."

At this, fresh tears flowed; the child implored her not to go away, not to leave her; but Paula could but refuse, though she was touched and astonished to find that she had reaped so rich a harvest of love, here where she had sown so little. Then she gave her hand at parting to the governess, and when she turned to Katharina, to bid farewell, hard as it was, to the murderer of her happiness, the young girl fell at her feet bathed in tears of repentance, covered her knees and hands with kisses, and confessed herself guilty of a terrible sin. Paula, however, would not allow her to finish; she lifted her up, kissed her forehead, and said that she quite understood how she had been led into it, and that she, like Mary, would try to forgive her.

Standing by the governor's many-oared barge, to which the young girls now escorted her, she found Orion. Twice already this morning he had tried in vain to get speech with her, and he looked pale and

agitated. He had a splendid bunch of flowers in his hand; he bestowed a hasty greeting on Mary and his betrothed, and did not heed the fact that Katharina returned it hesitatingly and without a word.

He went close up to Paula, told her in a low voice that Hiram was safe, and implored her, as she hoped to be forgiven for her own sins, to grant him a few minutes. When she rejected his prayer with a silent shrug, and went on towards the boat he put out his hand to help her, but she intentionally overlooked it and gave her hand to the physician. At this he sprang after her into the barge, saying in her ear in a tremulous whisper:

"A wretch, a miserable man entreats your mercy. I was mad yesterday. I love you, I love you — how deeply! — you will see!"

"Enough," she broke in firmly, and she stood up in the swaying boat. Philippus supported her, and Orion, laying the flowers in her lap, cried so that all could hear: "Your departure will sorely distress my father. He is so ill that we did not dare allow you to take leave of him. If you have anything to say to him. . ."

"I will find another messenger," she replied sternly.

"And if he asks the reason for your sudden departure?"

"Your mother and Philippus can give him an answer."

"But he was your guardian, and your fortune, I know. . ."

"In his hands it is safe."

"And if the physician's fears should be justified?"

"Then I will demand its restitution through a new Kyrios."

"You will receive it without that! — Have you no pity, no forgiveness?" For all answer she flung the flowers he had given her into the river; he leaped on shore, and regardless of the bystanders, pushed his fingers through his hair, claspings his hands to his burning brow.

The barge was pushed off, the rowers plied their oars like men; Orion gazed after it, panting with laboring breath, till a little hand grasped his, and Mary's sweet, childish voice exclaimed:

"Be comforted, uncle. I know just what is troubling you."

"What do you know?" he asked roughly.

"That you are sorry that you and Katharina should have spoken against her last evening, and against poor Hiram."

"Nonsense!" he angrily broke in. "Where is Katharina?"

"I was to tell you that she could not see you to-day. She loves you dearly, but she, too, is so very, very sorry."

"She may spare herself!" said the young man. "If there is anything to be sorry for it falls on me — it is crushing me to death. But what is this! — The devil's in it! What business is it of the child's? Now, be off with you this minute. Eudoxia, take this little girl to her tasks."

He took Mary's head between his hands, kissed her forehead with impetuous affection, and then pushed her towards her governess, who dutifully led her away.

When Orion found himself alone, he leaned against

a tree and groaned like a wounded wild beast. His heart was full to bursting.

"Gone, gone! Thrown away, lost! The best on earth!" He laid his hands on the tree-stem and pressed his head against it till it hurt him. He did not know how to contain himself for misery and self-reproach. He felt like a man who has been drunk and has reduced his own house to ashes in his intoxication. How all this could have come to pass he now no longer knew. After his nocturnal ride he had caused Nilus the treasurer to be waked, and had charged him to liberate Hiram secretly. But it was the sight of his stricken father that first brought him completely to his sober senses. By his bed-side, death in its terrible reality had stared him in the face, and he had felt that he could not bear to see that beloved parent die till he had made his peace with Paula, won her forgiveness, brought her whom his father loved so well into his presence, and besought his blessing on her and on himself.

Twice he had hastened from the chamber of suffering to her room, to entreat her to hear him, but in vain; and now, how terrible had their parting been! She was hard, implacable, cruel; and as he recalled her person and individuality as they had struck him before their quarrel, he was forced to confess that there was something in her present behavior which was not natural to her. This inhuman severity in the beautiful woman whose affection had once been his, and who, but now, had flung his flowers into the water, had not come from her heart; it was deliberately planned to make him feel her anger. What had withheld her, under such great provocation, from betraying that she had detected him in the theft of the emerald? All was not yet lost; and

he breathed more freely as he went back to the house where duty, and his anxiety for his father, required his presence. There were his flowers, floating on the stream.

“Hatred cast them there,” thought he, “but before they reach the sea many blossoms will have opened which were mere hard buds when she flung them away. She can never love any man but me, I feel it, I know it. The first time we looked into each other’s eyes the fate of our hearts was sealed. What she hates in me is my mad crime; what first set her against me was her righteous anger at my suit for Katharina. But that sin was but a dream in my life, which can never recur; and as for Katharina — I have sinned against her once, but I will not continue to sin through a whole, long lifetime. I have been permitted to trifle with love unpunished so often, that at last I have learnt to under-estimate its power. I could laugh as I sacrificed mine to my mother’s wishes; but that, and that alone, has given rise to all these horrors. But no, all is not yet lost! Paula will listen to me; and when she sees what my inmost feelings are — when I have confessed all to her, good and evil alike — when she knows that my heart did but wander, and has returned to her who has taught me that love is no jest, but solemn earnest, swaying all mankind, she will come round — everything will come right.”

A noble and rapturous light came into his face, and as he walked on, his hopes rose:

“When she is mine I know that everything good in me that I have inherited from my forefathers will blossom forth. When my mother called me to my father’s bed-side, she said: ‘Come, Orion, life is earnest for

you and me and all our house, your father. . . ' Yes, it is earnest indeed, however all this may end! To win Paula, to conciliate her, to bring her near to me, to have her by my side and do something great, something worthy of her — this is such a purpose in life as I need! With her, only with her I know I could achieve it; without her, or with that gilded toy Katharina, old age will bring me nothing but satiety, sobering and regrets — or, to call it by its Christian designation: bitter repentance. As Antaeus renewed his strength by contact with mother earth, so, father, do I feel myself grow taller when I only think of her. She is salvation and honor; the other is ruin and misery in the future. My poor, dear Father, you will, you must survive this stroke to see the fulfilment of all your joyful hopes of your son. You always loved Paula; perhaps you may be the one to appease her and bring her back to me; and how dear will she be to you, and, God willing, to my mother, too, when you see her reigning by my side an ornament to this house, to this city, to this country — reigning like a queen, your son's redeeming and guardian angel!"

Uplifted, carried away by these thoughts, he had reached the viridarium. He there found Sebek the steward waiting for his young master: "My lord is asleep now," he whispered, "as the physician foretold, but his face . . . Oh, if only we had Philippus here again!"

"Have you sent the chariot with the fast horses to the Convent of St. Cecilia?" asked Orion eagerly; and when Sebek had replied in the affirmative and vanished again indoors, the young man, overwhelmed with painful forebodings, sank on his knees near a column to

which a crucifix was hung, and lifted up his hands and soul in fervent prayer.

CHAPTER XV.

THE physician had installed Paula in her new home, and had introduced her to the family who were henceforth to be her protectors, and to enable her to lead a happier life.

He had but a few minutes to devote to her and her hosts; for scarcely had he taken her into the spacious rooms, gay with flowers, of which she now took possession, when he was enquired for by two messengers, both anxious to speak with him. Paula knew how critical her uncle's state was, and now, contemplating the probability of losing him, she first understood what he had been to her. Thus sorrow was her first companion in her new abode — a sorrow to which the comfort of her pretty, airy rooms added keenness.

One of the messengers was a young Arab from the other side of the river, who handed to Philippus a letter from the merchant Haschim. The old man informed him that, in consequence of a bad fall his eldest son had had, he was forced to start at once for Djiddah on the Red Sea. He begged the physician to take every care of his caravan-leader, to whom he was much attached, to remove him when he thought fit from the governor's house, and to nurse him till he was well, in some quiet retreat. He would bear in mind the commission given him by the daughter of the illustrious

Thomas. He sent with this letter a purse well-filled with gold pieces.

The other messenger was to take the leech back again in the light chariot with the fast horses to the suffering Mukaukas. He at once obeyed the summons, and the steeds, which the driver did not spare, soon carried him back to the governor's house.

A glance at his patient told him that this was the beginning of the end; still, faithful to his principle of never abandoning hope till the heart of the sufferer had ceased to beat, he raised the senseless man, heedless of Orion, who was on his knees by his father's pillow, signed to the deaconess in attendance, an experienced nurse, and laid cool, wet cloths on the head and neck of the sufferer, who was stricken with apoplexy. Then he bled him.

Presently the Mukaukas wearily opened his eyes, turned uneasily from side to side, and recognizing his kneeling son and his wife, bathed in tears, he murmured, almost inarticulately, for his paralyzed tongue no longer did his will: "Two pillules, Philip!"

The physician unhesitatingly acceded to the request of the dying man, who again closed his eyes; but only to reopen them, and to say, with the same difficulty, but with perfect consciousness: "The end is at hand! The blessing of the Church — Orion, the Bishop."

The young man hastened out of the room to fetch the prelate, who was waiting in the viridarium with two deacons, an exorcist, and a sacristan bearing the sacred vessels.

The governor listened in devout composure to the service of the last sacrament, looked on at the ceremonies performed by the exorcist as, with waving of

hands and pious ejaculations he banned the evil spirits and cast out from the dying man the devil that might have part in him; but he could no longer swallow the bread which, in the Jacobite rite, was administered soaked in the wine. Orion took the holy elements for him, and the dying man, with a smile, murmured to his son :

“ God be with thee, my son ! The Lord, it seems, denies me His precious Blood — and yet — let me try once more.”

This time he succeeded in swallowing the wine and a few crumbs of bread; and the bishop Ptolimus, a gentle old man of a beautiful and dignified presence, spoke comfort to him, and asked him whether he felt that he was dying penitent and in perfect faith in the mercy of his Lord and Saviour, and whether he repented of his sins and forgave his enemies.

The sick man bowed his head with an effort and murmured :

“ Even the Melchites who murdered my sons — and even the head of our Church, the Patriarch, who was only too glad to leave it to me to achieve things which he scrupled to do himself. That — that — But you, Ptolimus — a wise and worthy servant of the Lord — tell me to the best of your convictions : May I die in the belief that it was not a sin to conclude a peace with the Arab conquerors of the Greeks ? — May I, even at this hour, think of the Melchites as heretics ?”

The prelate drew his still upright figure to its full height, and his mild features assumed a determined — nay a stern expression as he exclaimed :

“ You know the decision pronounced by the Synod of Ephesus — the words which should be graven on the

heart of every true Jacobite as on marble and brass :
' May all who divide the nature of Christ — and this is what the Melchites do — be divided with the sword, be hewn in pieces and be burnt alive !' — No Head of our Church has ever hurled such a curse at the Moslems who adore the One God !"

The sufferer drew a deep breath, but he presently added with a sigh :

" But Benjamin the Patriarch, and John of Nîku have tormented my soul with fears ! Still, you too, Ptolimus, bear the crosier, and to you I will confess that your brethren in office, the shepherds of the Jacobite fold, have ruined my peace for hundreds of days and nights, and I have been near to cursing them. But before the night fell the Lord sent light into my soul, and I forgave them, and now, through you, I crave their pardon and their blessing. The Church has but reluctantly opened the doors to me in these last years ; but what servant can be allowed to complain of the Master from whom he expects grace ? So listen to me. I close my eyes as a faithful and devoted adherent of the Church, and in token thereof I will endow her to the best of my power and adorn her with rich and costly gifts ; I will — but I can say no more. — Speak for me, Orion. You know — the gems — the hanging. . . ."

His son explained to the bishop what a splendid gift, in priceless jewels, the dying man intended to offer to the Church. He desired to be buried in the church of St. John at Alexandria by his father's side, and to be prayed for in front of the mortuary chapel of his ancestors in the Necropolis ; he had set aside a sum of money, in his will, to pay for the prayers to be offered

for his soul. The priests were well pleased to hear this, and they absolved him unconditionally and completely; then, after blessing him fervently, they quitted the room.

Philippus heaved a sigh of relief when the ecclesiastics had departed, and constantly renewed the wet compress, while the dying governor lay for a long time in silence with his eyes shut. Presently he rubbed them as though he felt revived, raised his head a little with the physician's help, and looking up, said :

"Draw the ring off my finger, Orion, and wear it worthily. — Where is little Mary, where is Paula? I should wish to bid them farewell too."

The young man and his mother exchanged uneasy glances, but Neforis collected herself at once and replied :

"We have sent for Mary; but Paula — you know she never was happy with us — and since the events of yesterday. . . ."

"Well?" asked the invalid.

"She hastily quitted the house; but we parted friends, I can assure you of that; she is still in Memphis, and she spoke of you most affectionately and wished to see you, and charged me with many loving messages for you; so, if you really care to see her. . . ."

The sick man tried to nod his head, but in vain. He did not, however, insist on her being sent for, but his face wore an expression of deep melancholy and the words came faintly from his lips.

"Thomas' daughter! The noblest and loveliest of all."

"The noblest and loveliest," echoed Orion, in a voice that was tremulous with strong, deep and sincere

emotion ; then he begged the leech and the deaconess to leave him alone with his parents. As soon as they had left the room the young man spoke softly but urgently into his father's ear :

"You are quite right, Father," he said. "She is better and more noble, more beautiful and more high-minded than any girl living. I love her, and will stake everything to win her heart. Oh, God! Oh, God! Merciful Heaven! — Are you glad, do you give your consent, Father? You dearest and best of men; I see it in your face."

"Yes, yes, yes," murmured the governor; his yellow, bloodshot eyes looked up to Heaven, and with a terrible effort he stammered out: "Blessing — my blessing, on you and Paula. — Tell her from me. . . . If she had confided in her old uncle, as she used to do, the freedman would never have robbed us. — She is a brave soul; how she fought for the poor fellow. I will hear more about it if my strength holds out. — Why is she not here?"

"She wished so much to bid you farewell," replied Neforis, "but you were asleep."

"Was she in such a hurry to be gone?" asked her husband with a bitter smile. "Fear about the emerald may have had something to do with it? But how could I be angry with her? Hiram acted without her knowledge, I suppose? Yes, I knew it! — Ah; that dear, sweet face! If I could but see it once more. The joy of my eyes, and my companion at draughts! A faithful heart too; how she clung to her father! she was ready to sacrifice everything for him. — And you, you, my old. . . . But no — no reproaches at such a time. You, Mother — you, my Neforis, thanks, a thou-

sand thanks for all your love and kindness. What a mystical and magic bond is that of a Christian marriage like ours? Mark that, Orion. And you, Mother: I am anxious about this. You—do not hurt the girl's feelings again. Say—say you bless this union; it will make me happier at the last. — Paula and Orion; both of them—both. — I never dared before—but what better could we wish?"

The matron clasped her hands and sobbed out:

"Anything, everything you wish! But Father, Orion, our faith! — And then, merciful Saviour, that poor little Katharina!"

"Katharina!" repeated the sick man, and his feeble lips parted in a compassionate smile. "Our boy and the water—water—you know what I would say."

Then his eyes began to sparkle more brightly and he said in a low voice, but still eagerly, as though death were yet far from him:

"My name is George, the son of the Mukaukas; I am the great Mukaukas and our family—all fine men of a proud race; all: My father, my uncle, our lost sons, and Orion here—all palms and oaks! And shall a dwarf, a mere blade of rice be grafted on to the grand old stalwart stock? What would come of that? — Oh, ho! a miserable little brood! But Paula! The cedar of Lebanon—Paula; she would give new life to the grand old race."

"But our faith, our faith," moaned Neforis. "And you, Orion, do you even know what her feeling is towards you?"

"Yes and no. Let that rest for the present," said the youth, who was deeply moved. "Oh Father! if I only knew that your blessing. . ."

"The Faith, the Faith," interrupted the Mukaukas in a broken voice.

"I will be true to my own!" cried Orion, raising his father's hand to his lips. "But think, picture to yourself, how Paula and I would reign in this house, and how another generation would grow up in it worthy of the great Mukaukas and his ancestors!"

"I see it, I see it," murmured the sick man sinking back on his pillows, unconscious.

Philippus was immediately called in, and, with him, little Mary came weeping into the room. The physician's efforts to revive the sufferer were presently successful; again the sick man opened his eyes, and spoke more distinctly and loudly than before:

"There is a perfume of musk. It is the fragrance that heralds the Angel of Death."

After this he lay still and silent for a long time. His eyes were closed, but his brows were knit and showed that he was thinking with a painful effort. At length, with a sigh, he said, almost inaudibly: "So it was and so it is: The Greek oppressed my people with arbitrary cruelty as if we were dogs; the Moslem, too, is a stranger, but he is just. That which happened it was out of my power to prevent; and it is well, it is very well that it turned out so. — Very well," he repeated several times, and then he shivered and said with a groan:

"My feet are so cold! — But never mind, never mind, I like to be cool."

The leech and the deaconess at once set to work to heat blocks of wood to warm his feet; the sick man looked up gratefully and went on: "At church, in the House of God, I have often found it deliciously cool

and to-day it is the Church that eases my death-bed by her pardon. Do you, my Son, be faithful to her. No member of our house should ever be an apostate. As to the new faith—it is overspreading land after land with incredible power; ambition and covetousness are driving thousands into its fold. But we—we are faithful to Christ Jesus, we are no traitors. If I, I the Mukaukas, had consented to go over to the Khaliff I might have been a prince in purple, and have governed my own country in his name. How many have deserted to the Moslems! And the temptation will come to you, too, and their faith offers much that is attractive to the crowd. They imagine a Paradise full of unspeakably alluring joys—but we, my son—we shall meet again in our own, shall we not?”

“Yes, yes, Father!” cried the young man. “I will remain a Christian, staunch and true. . .”

“That is right,” interrupted the sick man. He was determined to forget that his son wished to marry a Melchite and went on quickly: “Paula. . . But no more of that. Remain faithful to your own creed—otherwise. . . However, child, seek your own road; you are—but you will walk in the right way, and it is because I know that, know it surely, that I can die so calmly.

“I have provided abundantly for your temporal welfare. I have been a good husband, a faithful father, have I not, O Saviour?—Have I not, Neforis? And that which is my best and surest comfort is that for many long years I have administered justice in this land, and never, never once—and Thou my Refuge and Comforter art my witness!—never once consciously or willingly have I been an unrighteous judge. Before me

the poor were equal with the rich, the powerful with the helpless widow. Who would have dared. . ." Here he broke off ; his eyes, wandering feebly round the room, fell on Mary who had sunk on her knees, opposite to Orion on the other side of the bed. The dying man, who had thus summed up the outcome of a long and busy life, ceased his reflections, and when the child saw that he was vainly trying to turn his powerless head towards her, she threw her arms round him with passionate grief ; unscared by his fixed gaze or the altered hue of his beloved face, she kissed his lips and cheeks, exclaiming :

"Grandfather, dear grandfather, do not leave us ; stay with us, pray, pray stay with us !"

Something faintly resembling a smile parted his parched lips, and all the tenderness with which his soul was overflowing for this sweet young bud of humanity would have found expression in his voice but that he could only mutter huskily :

"Mary, my darling ! For your sake I should be glad to live a long while yet, a very long while ; but the other world — I am standing already on its threshold. Good-bye — I must indeed say good-bye."

"No, no — I will pray ; oh ! I will pray so fervently that you may get well again !" cried the child. But he replied :

"Nay, nay. The Saviour is already taking me by the hand. Farewell, and again farewell. Did you bring Paula ? I do not see her. Did you bring Paula with you, sweetheart ? She — did she leave us in anger ? — If she only knew ; ah ! your Paula has treated us ill."

The child's heart was still full of the horrible crime which had so revolted her truthful nature, and which

had deprived her of rest all through an evening, a long night and a morning; she laid her little head close to that of the old man — her dearest and best friend. For years he had filled her father's place, and now he was dying, leaving her forever! But she could not let him depart with a false idea of the woman whom she worshipped with all the fervor of her child's heart; in a subdued voice, but with eager feeling, she said, close to his ear:

"But Grandfather, there is one thing you must know before the Saviour takes you away to be happy in Heaven. Paula told the truth, and never, never told a lie, not even for Hiram's sake. An empty gold frame hung to her necklace and no gem at all. Whatever Orion may say, I saw it myself and cannot be mistaken, as truly as I hope to see you and my poor father in heaven! And Katharina, too, thought better of it, and confessed to me just now that she had committed a great sin and had borne false witness before the judges to please her dear Orion. I do not know what Hiram had done to offend him; but on the strength of Katharina's evidence the judges condemned him to death. But Paula — you must understand that Paula had nothing, positively nothing whatever to do with the stealing of the emerald."

Orion, kneeling there, was condemned to hear every word the little girl so vehemently whispered, and each one pierced his heart like a dagger-thrust. Again and again he felt inclined to clutch at her across the bed and fling her on the ground before his father's eyes; but grief and astonishment seemed to have paralyzed his whole being; he had not even the power to interrupt her with a single word.

She had spoken, and all was told.

He clung to the couch like a shattered wretch; and when his father turned his eyes on him and gasped out: "Then the Court — our Court of Justice pronounced an unrighteous sentence?" he bowed his head in contrition.

The dying man murmured even less articulately and incoherently than before:

"The gem — the hanging — you, you perhaps — was it you? that emerald — I cannot. . ."

Orion helped his father in his vain efforts to utter the dreadful words. Sooner would he have died with the old man than have deceived him in such a moment; he replied humbly and in a low voice:

"Yes, Father — I took it. But as surely as I love you and my mother this, the first reckless act of my life, which has brought such horrors in its train . . . Shall be the last," he would have said; but the words "I took it," had scarcely passed his lips when his father was shaken by a violent trembling, the expression of his eyes changed fearfully, and before the son had spoken his vow to the end the unhappy father was, by a tremendous effort, sitting upright. Loud sobs of penitence broke from the young man's heaving breast, as the Mukaukas wrathfully exclaimed, in thick accents, as quickly as the heavy, paralyzed tongue would allow:

"You, you! A disgrace to our ancient and blameless Court! You? — Away with you! A thief, an unjust judge, a false witness, — and the only descendant of Menas! If only these hands were able — you — you — Go, villain!" And with this wild outcry, George, the gentle and just Mukaukas, sank back on his pillows; his bloodshot eyes were staring, fixed on vacancy;

his gasping lips repeated again and again, but less and less audibly the one word "Villain;" his swollen fingers clutched at the light coverlet that lay over him; a strange, shrill wheezing came through his open mouth, and the heavy corpse of the great dignitary fell, like a falling palm-tree, into Orion's arms.

Orion started up, his eyes inflamed, his hair all dishevelled, and shook the dead man as though to compel him back to life again, to hear his oath and accept his vow, to see his tears of repentance, to pardon him and take back the name of infamy which had been his parting word to his loved and spoilt child.

In the midst of this wild outbreak the physician came back, glanced at the dead man's distorted features, laid a hand on his heart, and said with solemn regret as he led little Mary away from the couch:

"A good and just man is gone from the land of the living."

Orion cried aloud and pushed away Mary, who had stolen close to him; for, young as she was, she felt that it was she who had brought the worst woe on her uncle, and that it was her part to show him some affection.

She ran then to her grandmother; but she, too, put her aside and fell on her knees by the side of her wretched son to weep with him; to console him who was inconsolable, and in whom, a few minutes since, she had hoped to find her own best consolation; but her fond words of motherly comfort found no echo in his broken spirit.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Philippus had parted from Paula he had told her that the Mukaukas might indeed die at any moment, but that it was possible that he might yet struggle with death for weeks to come. This hope had comforted her; for she could not bear to think that the only true friend she had had in Memphis, till she had become more intimate with the physician, should quit the world forever without having heard her justification. Nothing could be more unlikely than that any one in Neforis' household — excepting her little grandchild — should ever remember her with kindness; and she scarcely desired it; but she rebelled against the idea of forfeiting the respect she had earned, even in the governor's house. If her friend should succeed in prolonging her uncle's life, by a confidential interview with him she might win back his old affection and his good opinion.

Her new home she felt was but a resting-place, a tabernacle in the desert-journey of her solitary pilgrimage, and she here meant to avail herself of the information she had gathered from her Melchite dependents. Hope had now risen supreme in her heart over grief and disappointment. Orion's presence alone hung like a threatening hail-cloud over the sprouting harvest of her peace of mind. And yet, next to the necessity of waiting at Memphis for the return of her messenger, nothing tied her to the place so strongly as her interest in watching the future course of his life, at any rate

from a distance. What she felt for him — and she told herself it was deep aversion — nevertheless constituted a large share of her inner life, little as she would confess it to herself.

Her new hosts had received her as a welcome guest, and they certainly did not seem to be poor. The house was spacious, and though it was old and unpretentious it was comfortable and furnished with artistic taste. The garden had amazed her by the care lavished on it; she had seen a hump-backed gardener and several children at work in it. A strange party — for every one of them, like their chief, was in some way deformed or crippled.

The plot of ground — which extended towards the river to the road-way for foot passengers, vehicles and the files of men towing the Nile-boats — was but narrow, and bounded on either side by extensive premises. Not far from the spot where it lay nearest to the river was the bridge of boats connecting Memphis with the island of Rodah. To the right was the magnificent residence — a palace indeed — belonging to Susannah; to the left was an extensive grove, where tall palms, sycamores with spreading foliage, and dense thickets of blue-green tamarisk trees cast their shade. Above this bower of splendid shrubs and ancient trees rose a long, yellow building crowned with a turret; and this too was not unknown to her, for she had often heard it spoken of in her uncle's house, and had even gone there now and then escorted by Perpetua. It was the convent of St. Cecilia, the refuge of the last nuns of the orthodox creed left in Memphis; for, though all the other sisterhoods of her confession had long since been banished, these had been allowed to remain in their old

home, not only because they were famous sick-nurses, a distinction common to all the Melchite orders, but even more because the decaying municipality could not afford to sacrifice the large tax they annually paid to it. This tax was the interest on a considerable capital bequeathed to the convent by a certain wise predecessor of the Mukaukas', with the prudent proviso, ratified under the imperial seal of Theodosius II., that if the convent were at any time broken up, this endowment, with the land and buildings which it likewise owed to the generosity of the same benefactor, should become the property of the Christian emperor at that time reigning.

Mukaukas George, notwithstanding his well-founded aversion for everything Melchite, had taken good care not to press this useful Sisterhood too hardly, or to deprive his impoverished capital of its revenues only to throw them into the hands of the wealthy Moslems. The title-deed on which the Sisters relied was good; and the governor, who was a good lawyer as well as a just man, had not only left them unmolested, but in spite of his fears — during the last few years — for his own safety, had shown himself no respecter of persons by defending their rights firmly and resolutely against the powerful patriarch of the Jacobite Church. The Senate of the ancient capital naturally, approved his course, and had not merely suffered the heretic Sisterhood to remain, but had helped and encouraged it.

The Jacobite clergy of the city shut their eyes, and only opened them to watch the convent at Easter-tide; for on the Saturday before Easter, the nuns, in obedience to an agreement made before the Monophysite Schism, were required to pay a tribute of embroidered vest-

ments to the head of the Christian Churches, with wine of the best vintages of Kochome near the Pyramid of steps, and a considerable quantity of flowers and confectionary. So the ancient cœnobium of women was maintained, and though all Egypt was by this time Jacobite or Moslem, and many of the older Sisters had departed this life within the last year, no one had thought of enquiring how it was that the number of the nuns remained still the same, till the Jacobite archbishop Benjamin filled the patriarchal throne of Alexandria in the place of the Melchite Cyrus.

To Benjamin the heretical Sisters at Memphis — the hawks in a dove-cote, as he called them — were an offence, and he thought that the deed might bear a new interpretation: that as there was no longer a Christian emperor, and as the word "Christian" was used in the document, if the convent were broken up the property should pass into the hands of the only Christian magnate then existing in the country: himself, namely, and his Church. The ill-feeling which the Patriarch fostered against the Mukaukas had been aggravated to hostility by their antagonism on this matter.

A musical dirge now fell on Paula's ear from the convent chapel. Was the worthy Mother Superior dead? No, this lament must be for some other death, for the strange skirling wail of the Egyptian women came up to her corner window from the road, from the bridge, and from the boats on the river. No Jacobite of Memphis would have dared to express her grief so publicly for the death of a Melchite; and as the chorus of voices swelled, the thought struck her with a chill that it must be her uncle and friend who had closed his weary eyes in death.

It was with deep emotion and many tears that she perceived how sincerely the death of this righteous man was bewailed by all his fellow-citizens. Yes, he only, and no other Egyptian, could have called forth this great and expressive regret. The wailing women in the road were daubing the mud of the river on their foreheads and bosoms; men were standing in large groups and beating their heads and breasts with passionate gestures. On the bridge of boats the men would stop others, and from thence, too, piercing shrieks came across to her.

At last Philippus came in and confirmed her fears. The governor's death had shocked him no less than it did her, and he had to tell Paula all he knew of the dead man's last hours.

"Still, one good thing has come out of this misery," he said. "There is nothing so comforting as the discovery that we have been deceived in thinking ill of a man and of his character. This Orion, who has sinned so basely against himself and against you, is not utterly reprobate."

"Not?" interrupted Paula. "Then he has taken you in too!"

"Taken me in?" said the leech. "Hardly, I think. I have, alas! stood by many a death-bed; for I am too often sent for when Death is already beckoning the sick man away. I have met thousands of mourners in these melancholy scenes, which, I can assure you, are the very best school for training any one who desires to search the hearts of his fellow-creatures. By the bed of death, or in the mart, where everything is a question of Mine and Thine, it is easy to see how some — we for instance — are as careful to hide from the world all

that is great and noble in us as others are to conceal what is petty and mean — we read men's hearts as an open page. From my observations of the dying and of those who sorrow for them, I, who am not Menander not Lucian, could draw a series of portraits which should be as truthful likenesses as though the men had turned themselves inside out before me."

"That a dying man should show himself as he really is I can well believe," replied Paula. "He need have no further care for the opinions of others; but the mourners? Why, custom requires them to assume an air of grief and to shed tears."

"Very true; regret repeats itself by the side of the dead," replied the physician. "But the chamber of the dying is like a church. Death consecrates it, and the man who stands face to face with death often drops the mask by which he cheats his fellows. There we may see faces which you would shudder to look on, but others, too, which merely to see is enough to make us regard the degenerate species to which we belong with renewed respect."

"And you found such a comforting vision in Orion, — the thief, the false witness, the corrupt judge!" exclaimed Paula, starting up in indignant astonishment.

"There! you see," laughed Philippus. "Just like a woman! A little juggling, and lo! what was only rose color is turned to purple. No. The son of the Mukaukas has not yet undergone such a dazzling change of hue; but he has a feeling and impressible heart — and I hold even that in high esteem. I have no doubt that he loved his father deeply, nay passionately; though I have ample reason to believe him capable of the very worst. So long as I was present at the

scene of death the father and son were parting in all friendship and tenderness, and when the good old man's heart had ceased to beat I found Orion in a state which is only possible to have when love has lost what it held dearest."

"All acting!" Paula put in.

"But there was no audience, dear friend. Orion would not have got up such a performance for his mother and little Mary."

"But he is a poet — and a highly-gifted one too. He sings beautiful songs of his own invention to the lyre; his ecstatic and versatile mind works him up into any frame of feeling; but his soul is perverted; it is soaked in wickedness as a sponge drinks up water. He is a vessel full of beautiful gifts, but he has forfeited all that was good and noble in him — all!"

The words came in eager haste from her indignant lips. Her cheeks glowed with her vehemence, and she thought she had won over the physician; but he gravely shook his head, and said:

"Your righteous anger carries you too far. How often have you blamed me for severity and suspicions; but now I have to beg you to allow me to ask your sympathy for an experience to which you would probably have raised no objection the day before yesterday: I have met with evil-doers of every degree. Think, for instance, how many cases of wilful poisoning I have had to investigate."

"Even Homer called Egypt the land of poison," exclaimed Paula. "And it seems almost incredible that Christianity has not altered it in the least. Kosmas, who had seen the whole earth, could nowhere find more malice, deceit, hatred, and ill-will than exist here."

"Then you see in what good schools my experience of the wickedness of men has ripened," said Philippus smiling, "and they have taught me chiefly that there is never a criminal, a sinner, or a scapegrace, however infamous he may be, however cruel or lost to virtue, in whom some good quality or other may not be discovered. — Do you remember Nechebt, the horrible woman who poisoned her two brothers and her own father? She was captured scarcely three weeks ago; and that very monster in human form could almost die of hunger and thirst for the sake of her rascally son, who is a common soldier in the imperial army; at last she took to concocting poisons, not to improve her own wretched condition, but to send the shameless wretch means for a fresh debauch. I have known a thousand similar cases, but I will only mention that of one of the wildest and blood-thirstiest of robbers, who had evaded the vigilance of the watch again and again, but at last fell into their hands — and how? Because he had heard that his old mother was ill and he longed to see the withered old woman once more and give her a kiss, since he was her own child! In the same way Orion, however reprobate we may think him, has at any rate one characteristic which we must approve of: a tender affection for his father and mother. Your sponge is not utterly steeped in wickedness; there are still some pores, some cells which resist it; and if in him, as in so many others, the heart is one of them, then I say hopefully, like Horace the Roman: '*Nil desperandum.*' It would be unjust to give him up altogether for lost."

To this assurance Paula found no answer; indeed, it struck her that — if Orion had told her the truth —

it was only to please his mother that he had asked Katharina to marry him, while she herself occupied his heart.—The physician, wishing to change the subject, was about to speak again of the death of the Mukaukas, when one of the crippled serving girls came to announce a woman who asked to speak with Paula. A few minutes later she was clasped in the embrace of her faithful old friend and nurse, who rejoiced as heartily, laughing and crying for sheer delight, as if no tidings of misfortune had reached her; while Paula, though so much younger, was cut to the heart, and could not shake off the spell of her grief.

Perpetua understood this and owed her no grudge for the coolness with which she met her joyful excitement.

She told Paula that she had been well treated in her hot cell, and that about half an hour since Orion himself, the young Master now, had opened the door of her prison. He had been very gracious to her, but looked so pale and sad. The overbearing young man was quite altered; his eyes, which were dim with weeping, had moved her, Perpetua, to tears. She trusted that God would forgive him for his sins against herself and Paula; he must have been possessed by some evil demon; he had not been at all like himself; for he had a kind, warm heart, and though he had been so hard and unjust yesterday to poor Hiram he had made it up to him the first thing this morning, and had not only let him out of prison but had sent him and his son home to Damascus with large gifts and two horses. Nilus had told her this. He who hoped to be forgiven by his neighbor must also be ready to forgive. The great Augustine, even, had been no model of virtue in

his youth and yet he had become a shining light in the Church ; and now the son of the Mukaukas would tread in his father's footsteps. He was a handsome, engaging man, who would be the joy of their hearts yet, they might be very sure. Why, he had been as grave and as solemn as a bishop to-day ; perhaps he had already turned over a new leaf. He himself had put her into his mother's chariot and desired the charioteer to drive her hither : what would Paula say to that ? Her things were to be given over to her to-morrow morning, and packed under her own eyes, and sent after her. Nilus, the treasurer, had come with her to deliver a message to Paula ; but he had gone first to the convent.

Paula desired the old woman to go thither and fetch him ; as soon as Perpetua had left the room, she exclaimed :

"There, you see, is some one who is quite of your opinion. What creatures we are ! Last evening my good Betta would have thought no pit of hell too deep for our enemy, and now ? To be led to a chariot by such a fine gentleman in person is no doubt flattering ; and how quickly the old body has forgotten all her grievances, how soothed and satisfied she is by the gracious permission to pack her precious and cherished possessions with her own hands. — You told me once that the Jacobites had made a Saint Orion out of the pagan god Osiris, and my old Betta sees a future Saint Augustine in the governor's son. I can see that she already regards him as her tutelary patron, and when we get back to Syria, she will be begging me to join her in a pilgrimage to his shrine !"

"And you will perhaps consent," replied the phy-

sician, to whom Paula at this moment, for the first time since his heart had glowed with love for her, did not seem to be quite what a man looks for in the woman he adores. Hitherto he had seen and heard nothing that was not high-minded and worthy of her; but her last words had been spoken with vehement and indignant irony — and in Philip's opinion irony, blame which was intended to wound and not to improve its object, was unbecoming in a noble woman. The scornful laugh, with which she had triumphantly ended her speech, had opened as it were a wide abyss between his mind and hers. He, as he freely confessed to himself, was of a coarser and humbler grain than Paula, and he was apt to be satirical oftener than was right. She had been wont to dislike this habit in him; he had been glad that she did; it answered to the ideal he had formed of what the woman he loved should be. But now she had turned satirical; and her irony was no jest of the lips. It sprang, full of passion, from her agitated soul; this it was that grieved the leech who knew human nature, and at the same time roused his apprehensions. Paula read his disapproval in his face, and felt that there was a deep significance in his words: "And you will perhaps consent."

"Men are vexed," thought she, "when, after they have decisively expressed an opinion, we women dare unhesitatingly to assert a different one," so, as she would on no account hurt the feelings of the friend to whom she owed so much, she said kindly:

"I do not care to enquire into the meaning of your strange prognostication. Thank God, by your kindness and care I have severed every tie that could have bound me to my poor uncle's son! — Now we will

drop the subject; we have said too much about him already."

"That is quite my opinion," replied Philippus. "And, indeed, I would beg you quite to forget my 'perhaps.' I live wholly in the present and am no prophet; but I foresee, nevertheless, that Orion will make every effort, cost what it may. . . ."

"Well?"

"To approach you again, to win your forgiveness, to touch your heart, to. . . ."

"Let him dare!" exclaimed Paula lifting her hand with a threatening gesture.

"And when he, gifted as he is in every way, has found his better self again and can come forward purified and worthy of the approbation of the best. . . ."

"Still I will never, never forget how he has sinned and what he brought upon me! — Do you think that I have already forgotten your conversation with Neforis? You ask nothing of your friends but honest feeling akin to your own, — and what is it that repels me from Orion but feeling? Thousands have altered their behavior, but — answer me frankly — surely not what we mean by their feeling?"

"Yes, that too," said the leech with stern gravity. "Feeling, too, may change. Or do you range yourself on the side of the Arab merchant and his fellow-Moslems, who regard man as the plaything of a blind Fate? — But our spiritual teachers tell us that the evil to which we are predestined, which is that born into the world with us, may be averted, turned and guided to good by what they call spiritual regeneration. But who that lives in the tumult of the world can ever succeed in 'killing himself' in their sense of the word, in

dying while yet he lives, to be born again, a new man? The penitent's garb does not suit the stature of an Orion; however, there is for him another way of returning to the path he has lost. Fortune has hitherto offered her spoilt favorite so much pleasure, that sheer enjoyment has left him no time to think seriously on life itself; now she is showing him its graver side, she is inviting him to reflect; and if he only finds a friend to give him the counsel which my father left in a letter for me, his only child, as a youth — and if he is ready to listen, I regard him as saved."

"And that word of counsel — what is it?" asked Paula with interest.

"To put it briefly, it is this: Life is not a banquet spread by fate for our enjoyment, but a duty which we are bound to fulfil to the best of our power. Each one must test his nature and gifts, and the better he uses them for the weal and benefit of the body of which he was born a member, the higher will his inmost gladness be, the more certainly will he attain to a beautiful peace of mind, the less terrors will Death have for him. In the consciousness of having sown seed for eternity he will close his eyes like a faithful steward at the end of each day, and of the last hour vouchsafed to him on earth. If Orion recognizes this, if he submits to accept the duties imposed on him by existence, if he devotes himself to them now for the first time to the best of his powers, a day may come when I shall look up to him with respect — nay, with admiration. The shipwreck of which the Arab spoke has overtaken him. Let us see how he will save himself from the waves, and behave when he is cast on shore."

"Let us see!" repeated Paula, "and wish that he

may find such an adviser! As you were speaking it struck me that it was my part. — But no, no! He has placed himself beyond the pale of the compassion which I might have felt even for an enemy after such a frightful blow. He! He can and shall never be anything to me till the end of time. I have to thank you for having found me this haven of rest. Help me now to keep out everything that can intrude itself here to disturb my peace. If Orion should ever dare, for whatever purpose, to force or steal a way into this house, I trust to you, my friend and deliverer!"

She held out her hand to Philippus, and as he took it the blood seethed in his veins with tender emotion.

"My strength, like my heart, is wholly yours!" he exclaimed ardently. "Command them, and if the devoted love of a faithful, plain-spoken man. . . ."

"Say no more, no, no!" Paula broke in with anxious vehemence. "Let us remain closely bound together by friendship — as brother and sister."

"As brother and sister?" he dully echoed with a melancholy smile. "Aye, friendship too is a beautiful, beautiful thing. But yet — let me speak — I have dreamed of love, the tossing sea of passion; I have felt its surges here — in here; I feel them still. . . . But man, man," and he struck his forehead with his fist, "have you forgotten, like a fool, what your image is in the mirror; have you forgotten that you are an ugly, clumsy fellow, and that the gorgeous flower you long for. . . ."

Paula had shrunk back, startled by her friend's vehemence; but she now went up to him, and taking his hand with frank spirit, she said impressively:

"It is not so, Philippus, my dear, kind, only friend.

The gorgeous flower you desire I can no longer give you — or any one. It is mine no longer; for when it had opened, once for all, cruel feet trod it down. Do not abuse your mirrored image; do not call yourself a clumsy fellow. The best and fairest might be proud of your love, just as you are. Am I not proud, shall I not always be proud of your friendship?"

"Friendship, friendship!" he retorted, snatching away his hand. "This burning, longing heart thirsts for other feelings! Oh, woman! I know the wretch who has trodden down the flower of flowers in your heart, and I, madman that I am, can sing his praises, can take his part; and cost what it may, I will still do so as long as you. . . . But perhaps the glorious flower may strike new roots in the soil of hatred and I, the hapless wretch who water it, may see it."

At this, Paula again took both his hands, and exclaimed in deep and painful agitation of mind:

"Say no more, I beg and entreat you. How can I live in peace here, under your protection and in constant intercourse with you, without knowing myself guilty of a breach of propriety such as the most sacred feelings of a young girl bid her avoid, if you persist in overstepping the limits which bound true and faithful friendship? I am a lonely girl and should give myself up to despair, as lost, if I could not take refuge in the belief that I can rely upon myself. Be satisfied with what I have to offer you, my friend, and may God reward you! Let us both remain worthy of the esteem which, thank Heaven! we are fully justified in feeling for each other."

The physician, deeply moved, bent his head;

scarcely able to control himself, he pressed her firm white hand to his lips, while, just at this moment, Perpetua and the treasurer came into the room.

This worthy official — a perfectly commonplace man, neither tall nor short, neither old nor young, with a pale, anxious face, furrowed by work and responsibility, but shrewd and finely cut — glanced keenly at the pair, and then proceeded to lay a considerable sum in gold pieces before Paula. His young master had sent it, in obedience to his deceased father's wishes, for her immediate needs; the rest, the larger part of her fortune, with a full account, would be given over to her after the Mukaukas was buried. Nilus could, however, give her an approximate idea of the sum, and it was so considerable that Paula could not believe her ears. She now saw herself secure against external anxiety, nay, in such ease that she was justified in living at some expense.

Philippus was present throughout the interview, and it cut him to the heart. It had made him so happy to think that he was all in all to the poor orphan, and could shelter her against pressing want. He had been prepared to take upon himself the care of providing Paula with the home she had found and everything she could need; and now, as it turned out, his protégé was not merely higher in rank than himself, but much richer.

He felt as though Orion's envoy had robbed him of the best joy in life. After introducing Paula to her worthy host and his family, he quitted the house of Rufinus with a very crushed aspect.

When night came Perpetua once more enjoyed the privilege of assisting her young mistress to undress;

but Paula could not sleep, and when she joined her new friends next morning she told herself that here, if anywhere, was the place where she might recover her lost peace, but that she must still have a hard struggle and a long pilgrimage before she could achieve this.

CHAPTER XVII.

DURING all these hours Orion had been in the solitude of his own rooms. Next to them was little Mary's sleeping-room; he had not seen the child again since leaving his father's death-bed. He knew that she was lying there in a very feverish state, but he could not so far command himself as to enquire for her. When, now and again, he could not help thinking of her, he involuntarily clenched his fists. His soul was shaken to the foundations; desperate, beside himself, incapable of any thought but that he was the most miserable man on earth — that his father's curse had blighted him — that nothing could undo what had happened — that some cruel and inexorable power had turned his truest friend into a foe and had sundered them so completely that there was no possibility of atonement or of moving him to a word of pardon or a kindly glance — he paced the long room from end to end, flinging himself on his knees at intervals before the divan, and burying his burning face in the soft pillows. From time to time he could pray, but each time he broke off; for what Power in Heaven or on earth could unseal those closed eyes and stir that heart to beat again, that tongue to speak — could vouchsafe to him, the outcast,

the one thing for which his soul thirsted and without which he thought he must die: Pardon, pardon, his father's pardon! Now and then he struck his forehead and heart like a man demented, with cries of anguish, curses and lamentations.

About midnight — it was but just twelve hours since that fearful scene, and to him it seemed like as many days — he threw himself on the couch, dressed as he was in the dark mourning garments, which he had half torn off in his rage and despair, and broke out into such loud groans that he himself was almost frightened in the silence of the night. Full of self-pity and horror at his own deep grief, he turned his face to the wall to screen his eyes from the clear, full moon, which only showed him things he did not want to see, while it hurt him.

His torture was beginning to be quite unbearable; he fancied his soul was actually wounded, riven, and torn; it had even occurred to him to seize his sharpest sword and throw himself upon it like Ajax in his fury — and like Cato — and so put a sudden end to this intolerable and overwhelming misery.

He started up for — surely it was no illusion, no mistake — the door of his room was softly opened and a white figure came in with noiseless, ghostly steps. He was a brave man, but his blood ran cold; however, in a moment he recognized his nocturnal visitor as little Mary. She came across the moonlight without speaking, but he exclaimed in a sharp tone:

“What is the meaning of this? What do you want?”

The child started and stood still in alarm, stretching out imploring hands and whispering timidly:

"I heard you lamenting. Poor, poor Orion! And it was I who brought it all on you, and so I could not stay in bed any longer — I must — I could not help. . . ." But she could say no more for sobs. Orion exclaimed :

"Very well, very well: go back to your own room and sleep. I will try not to groan so loud."

He ended his speech in a less rough tone, for he observed that the child had come to see him, though she was ill, with bare feet and only in her night-shift, and was trembling with cold, excitement, and grief. Mary, however, stood still, shook her head, and replied, still weeping though less violently :

"No, no. I shall stop here and not go away till you tell me that you — Oh, God, you never can forgive me, but still I must say it, I must."

With a sudden impulse she ran straight up to him, threw her arms round his neck, laid her head against his, and then, as he did not immediately push her away, kissed his cheeks and brow.

At this a strange feeling came over him; he himself did not know what it was, but it was as though something within him yielded and gave way, and the moisture which felt warm in his eyes and on his cheeks was not from the child's tears but his own. This lasted through many minutes of silence; but at last he took the little one's arms from about his neck, saying :

"How hot your hands and your cheeks are, poor thing! You are feverish, and the night air blows in chill—you will catch fresh cold by this mad behavior."

He had controlled his tears with difficulty, and as he spoke, in broken accents, he carefully wrapped

her in the black robe he had thrown off and said kindly :

"Now, be calm, and I will try to compose myself. You did not mean any harm, and I owe you no grudge. Now go ; you will not feel the draught in the anteroom with that wrap on. — Go ; be quick."

"No, no," she eagerly replied. "You must let me say what I have to say or I cannot sleep. You see I never thought of hurting you so dreadfully, so horribly — never, never ! I was angry with you, to be sure, because — but when I spoke I really and truly did not think of you, but only of poor Paula. You do not know how good she is, and grandfather was so fond of her before you came home ; and he was lying there and going to die so soon, and I knew that he believed Paula to be a thief and a liar, and it seemed to me so horrible, so unbearable to see him close his eyes with such a mistake in his mind, such an injustice ! — Not for his sake, oh no ! but for Paula's ; so then I — Oh Orion ! the Merciful Saviour is my witness, I could not help it ; if I had had to die for it I could not have helped it ! I should have died, if I had not spoken !"

"And perhaps it was well that you spoke," interrupted the young man, with a deep sigh. "You see, child, your lost father's miserable brother is a ruined man and it matters little about him ; but Paula, who is a thousand times better than I am, has at least had justice done her ; and as I love her far more dearly than your little heart can conceive of, I will gladly be friends with you again ; nay, I shall be more fond of you than ever. That is nothing great or noble, for I need love — much love to make life tolerable. The best love a man may have I have forfeited, fool that I am ! and

now dear, good little soul, I could not bear to lose yours! So there is my hand upon it; now, give me another kiss and then go to bed and sleep."

But still Mary would not do his bidding, but only thanked him vehemently and then asked with sparkling eyes:

"Really, truly? Do you love Paula so dearly?" At this point however she suddenly checked herself. "And little Katharina. . ."

"Never mind about that," he replied with a sigh. "And learn a lesson from all this. I, you see, in an hour of recklessness did a wrong thing; to hide it I had to do further wrong, till it grew to a mountain which fell on me and crushed me. Now, I am the most miserable of men and I might perhaps have been the happiest. I have spoilt my own life by my own folly, weakness, and guilt; and I have lost Paula, who is dearer to me than all the other creatures on earth put together. Yes, Mary, if she had been mine, your poor uncle would have been the most enviable fellow in the world, and he might have been a fine fellow, too, a man of great achievements. But as it is!— Well, what is done cannot be undone! Now go to bed child; you cannot understand it all till you are older."

"Oh I understand it already and much better perhaps than you suppose," cried the ten years' old child. "And if you love Paula so much why should not she love you? You are so handsome, you can do so many things, every one likes you, and Paula would have loved you, too, if only . . . Will you promise not to be angry with me, and may I say it?"

"Speak out, little simpleton."

"She cannot owe you any grudge when she knows

how dreadfully you are suffering on her account and that you are good at heart, and only that once ever did — you know what. Before you came home, grandfather said a hundred times over what a joy you had been to him all your life through, and now, now . . . Well, you are my uncle, and I am only a stupid little girl ; still, I know that it will be just the same with you as it was with the prodigal son in the Bible. You and grandfather parted in anger. . .”

“ He cursed me,” Orion put in gloomily.

“ No, no ! For I heard every word he said. He only spoke of your evil deed in those dreadful words and bid you go out of his sight.”

“ And what is the difference — Cursed or out-cast ?”

“ Oh ! a very great difference ! He had good reason to be angry with you ; but the prodigal son in the Bible became his father's best beloved, and he had the fatted calf slain for him and forgave him all ; and so will grandfather in heaven forgive, if you are good again, as you used to be to him and to all of us. Paula will forgive you, too ; I know her — you will see. Katharina loved you of course ; but she, dear Heaven ! She is almost as much a child as I am ; and if only you are kind to her and make her some pretty present she will soon be comforted. She really deserves to be punished for bearing false witness, and her punishment cannot, at any rate, be so heavy as yours.”

These words from the lips of an innocent child could not but fall like seed corn on the harrowed field of the young man's tortured soul and refresh it as with morning dew. Long after Mary had gone to rest he lay thinking them over.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE funeral rites over the body of the deceased Mukaukas were performed on the day after the morrow. Since the priesthood had forbidden the old heathen practice of mummifying the dead, and even cremation had been forbidden by the Antonines, the dead had to be interred soon after decease; only those of high rank were hastily embalmed and lay in state in some church or chapel to which they had contributed an endowment. Mukaukas George was, by his own desire, to be conveyed to Alexandria and there buried in the church of St. John by his father's side; but the carrier pigeon, by which the news of the governor's death had been sent to the Patriarch, had returned with instructions to deposit the body in the family tomb at Memphis, as there were difficulties in the way of the fulfillment of his wishes.

Such a funeral procession had not been seen there within the memory of man. Even the Moslem viceroy, the great general Amrû, came over from the other side of the Nile, with his chief military and civil officers, to pay the last honors to the just and revered governor. Their brown, sinewy figures, and handsome calm faces, their golden helmets and shirts of mail, set with precious stones—trophies of the war of destruction in Persia and Syria—their magnificent horses with splendid trappings, and the authoritative dignity of their bearing made a great impression on the crowd. They arrived with slow and impressive solemnity; they returned like

a cloud driven before the storm, galloping homewards from the burial-ground along the quay, and then thundering and clattering over the bridge of boats. Vivid and dazzling lightnings had flashed through the wreaths of white dust that shrouded them, as their gold armor reflected the sun. Verily, these horsemen, each of them worthy to be a prince in his pride, could find it no very hard task to subdue the mightiest realms on earth.

Men and women alike had gazed at them with trembling admiration : most of all at the heroic stature and noble dusky face of Amrû, and at the son of the deceased Mukaukas, who, by the Moslem's desire, rode at his side in mourning garb on a fiery black horse.

The handsome youth, and the lordly, powerful man were a pair from whom the women were loth to turn their eyes ; for both alike were of noble demeanor, both of splendid stature, both equally skilled in controlling the impatience of their steeds, both born to command. Many a Memphite was more deeply impressed by the head of the famous warrior, erect on a long and massive throat, with its sharply-chiselled aquiline nose and flashing black eyes, than by the more regular features and fine, slightly-waving locks of the governor's son — the last representative of the oldest and proudest race in all Egypt.

The Arab looked straight before him with a steady, commanding gaze ; the youth, too, looked up and forwards, but turned from time to time to survey the crowd of mourners. As he caught sight of Paula, among the group of women who had joined the procession, a gleam of joy passed over his pale face, and a faint flush tinged his cheeks ; his fixed outlook had knit

his brows and had given his features an expression of such ominous sternness that one and another of the bystanders whispered :

“ Our gay and affable young lord will make a severe ruler.”

The cause of his indignation had not escaped the notice either of his noble companion or of the crowd. He alone knew as yet that the Patriarch had prohibited the removal of his father's remains to Alexandria ; but every one could see that the larger portion of the priesthood of Memphis were absent from this unprecedented following. The Bishop alone marched in front of the six horses drawing the catafalque on which the costly sarcophagus was conveyed to the burying-place, in accordance with ancient custom : — Bishop Plotinus, with John, a learned and courageous priest, and a few choristers bearing a crucifix and chanting psalms.

On arriving at the Necropolis they all dismounted, and the barefooted runners in attendance on the Arabs came forward to hold the horses. By the tomb the Bishop pronounced a few warm words of eulogy, after which the thin chant of the choristers sounded trivial and meagre enough ; but scarcely had they ceased when the crowd uplifted its many thousand voices, and a hymn of mourning rang out so loud and grand that this burial ground had scarcely ever heard the like. The remaining ceremonies were hasty and incomplete, since the priests who were indispensable to their performance had not made their appearance.

Amrû, whose falcon eye nothing could escape, at once noted the omission and exclaimed, in so loud and inconsiderate a voice that it could be heard even at some distance :

"The dead is made to atone for what the living, in his wisdom, did for his country's good, hand-in-hand with us Moslems."

"By the Patriarch's orders," replied Orion, and his voice quavered, while the veins in his forehead swelled with rage. "But I swear, by my father's soul, that as surely as there is a just God, it shall be an evil day for Benjamin when he closes the gate of Heaven against this noblest of noble souls."

"We carry the key of ours under our own belt," replied the general, striking his deep chest, while he smiled consciously and with a kindly eye on the young man. "Come and see me on Saturday, my young friend; I have something to say to you! I shall expect you at sundown at my house over there. If I am not at home by dusk, you must wait for me."

As he spoke he twisted his hand in his horse's mane and Orion prepared to assist him to mount; but the Arab, though a man of fifty, was too quick for him. He flung himself into the saddle as lightly as a youth, and gave his followers the signal for departure.

Paula had been standing close to the entrance of the tomb with Dame Neforis, and she had heard every word of the dialogue between the two men. Pale, as she beheld him, in costly but simple, flowing, mourning robes, stricken by solemn and manly indignation, it was impossible that she should not confess that the events of the last days had had a powerful effect on the misguided youth.

When Paula had led the grief-worn but tearless widow to her chariot, and had then returned home with Perpetua, the image of the handsome and wrathful youth as he lifted his powerful arm and tightly-

clenched fist and shook them in the air, still constantly haunted her. She had not failed to observe that he had seen her standing opposite to him by the open tomb and she had been able to avoid meeting his eye; but her heart had throbbed so violently that she still felt it quivering, she had not succeeded in thinking of the beloved dead with due devotion.

Orion, as yet, had neither come near her in her peaceful retreat, nor sent any messenger to deliver her belongings, and this she thought very natural; for she needed no one to tell her how many claims there must be on his time.

But though, before the funeral, she had firmly resolved to refuse to see him if he came, and had given her nurse full powers to receive from his hand the whole of her property, after the ceremony this line of conduct no longer struck her as seemly; indeed, she considered it no more than her duty to the departed not to repel Orion if he should crave her forgiveness.

And there was another thing which she owed to her uncle. She desired to be the first to point out to Orion, from Philip's point of view, that life was a post, a duty; and then, if his heart seemed opened to this admonition, then — but no, this must be all that could pass between them — then all must be at an end, extinct, dead, like the fires in a sunken raft, like a soap-bubble that the wind has burst, like an echo that has died away — all over and utterly gone.

And as to the counsel she thought of offering to the man she had once looked up to? What right had she to give it? Did he not look like a man quite capable of planning and living his own life in his own strength? — Her heart thirsted for him, every fibre of her being

yearned to see him again, to hear his voice, and it was this longing, this craving to which she gave the name of duty, connecting it with the gratitude she owed to the dead.

She was so much absorbed in these reflections and doubts that she scarcely heard all the garrulous old nurse was saying as she walked by her side.

Perpetua could not be easy over such a funeral ceremony as this; so different to anything that Memphis had been wont to see. No priests, a procession on horseback, mourners riding, and among them the son even of the dead—while of old the survivors had always followed the body on foot, as was everywhere the custom! And then a mere chirping of crickets at the tomb of such illustrious dead, followed by the disorderly squalling of an immense mob—it had nearly cracked her ears! However, the citizens might be forgiven for that, since it was all in honor of their departed governor!—This thought touched even her resolute heart and brought the tears to her eyes; but it roused her wrath, too, for had she not seen quite humble folk buried in a more solemn manner and with worthier ceremonial than the great and good Mukaukas George, who had made such a magnificent gift to the Church. Oh those Jacobites! They only were capable of such ingratitude, only their heretical prelate could commit such a crime. Every one in the Convent of St. Cecilia, from the abbess down to the youngest novice, knew that the Patriarch had sent word by a carrier pigeon forbidding the Bishop to allow the priests to take part in the ceremony. Plotinus was a worthy man, and he had been highly indignant at these instructions; it was not in his power to contravene them; but

at any rate he had led the procession in person, and had not forbidden John's accompanying him. Orion, however, had not looked as though he meant to brook such an insult to his father or let it pass unpunished. And whose arm was long enough to reach the Patriarch's throne if not . . . But no, it was impossible! the mere thought of such a thing made her blood run cold. Still, still. . . And how graciously the Moslem leader had talked with him! — Merciful Heaven! If he were to turn apostate from the holy Christian faith, like so many reprobate Egyptians, and subscribe to the wicked doctrines of the Arabian false prophet! It was a tempting creed for shameless men, allowing them to have half a dozen wives or more without regarding it as a sin. A man like Orion could afford to keep them, of course; for the abbess had said that every one knew that the great Mukaukas was a very rich man, though even the chief magistrate of the city could not fully satisfy himself concerning the enormous amount of property left. Well, well; God's ways were past finding out. Why should He smother one under heaps of gold, while He gave thousands of poor creatures too little to satisfy their hunger!

By the end of this torrent of words the two women had reached the house; and not till then was Paula clear in her own mind: Away, away with the passion which still strove for the mastery, whether it were indeed hatred or love! For she felt that she could not rightly enjoy her recovered freedom, her new and quiet happiness in the pretty home she owed to the physician's thoughtful care, till she had finally given up Orion and broken the last tie that had bound her to his house.

Could she desire anything more than what the present had to offer her? She had found a true haven of rest where she lacked for nothing that she could desire for herself after listening to the admonitions of Philip-pus. Round her were good souls who felt with and for her, many occupations for which she was well-fitted, and which suited her tastes, with ample opportunities of bestowing and winning love. Then, a few steps through pleasant shades took her to the convent where she could every day attend divine service among pious companions of her own creed, as she had done in her childhood. She had longed intensely for such food for the spirit, and the abbess—who was the widow of a distinguished patrician of Constantinople and had known Paula's parents—could supply it in abundance. How gladly she talked to the girl of the goodness and the beauty of those to whom she owed her being and whom she had so early lost! She could pour out to this motherly soul all that weighed on her own, and was received by her as a beloved daughter of her old age.

And her hosts—what kind-hearted though singular folks! nay, in their way, remarkable. She had never dreamed that there could be on earth any beings at once so odd and so lovable.

First there was old Rufinus, the head of the house, a vigorous, hale old man, who, with his long silky, snow-white hair and beard, looked something like the aged St. John and something like a warrior grown grey in service. What an amiable spirit of childlike meekness he had, in spite of the rough ways he sometimes fell into. Though inclined to be contradictory in his intercourse with his fellow-men, he was merry and jocose

when his views were opposed to theirs. She had never met a more contented soul or a franker disposition, and she could well understand how much it must fret and gall such a man to live on, day after day, appearing, in one respect at any rate, different from what he really was. For he, too, belonged to her confession; but, though he sent his wife and daughter to worship in the convent chapel, he himself was compelled to profess himself a Coptic Christian, and submit to the necessity of attending a Jacobite church with all his family on certain holy days, averse as he was to its unattractive form of worship.

Rufinus possessed a sufficient fortune to secure him a comfortable maintenance; and yet he was hard at work, in his own way, from morning till night. Not that his labors brought him any revenues; on the contrary, they led to claims on his resources; every one knew that he was a man of good means, and this would have certainly involved him in persecution if the Patriarch's spies had discovered him to be a Melchite, resulting in exile and probably the confiscation of his goods. Hence it was necessary to exercise caution, and if the old man could have found a purchaser for his house and garden, in a city where there were ten times as many houses empty as occupied, he would long since have set out with all his household to seek a new home.

Most aged people of vehement spirit and not too keen intellect, adopt a saying as a stop-gap or resting-place, and he was fond of using two phrases one of which ran: "As sure as man is the standard of all things" and the other — referring to his house — "As sure as I long to be quit of this lumber." But the lum-

ber consisted of a well-built and very spacious dwelling-house, with a garden which had commanded a high price in earlier times on account of its situation near the river. He himself had acquired it at very small cost shortly before the Arab incursion, and—so quickly do times change—he had actually bought it from a Jacobite Christian who had been forced by the Melchite Patriarch Cyrus, then in power, to fly in haste because he had found means to convert his orthodox slaves to his confession.

It was Philippus who had persuaded his accomplished and experienced friend to come to Memphis; he had clung to him faithfully, and they assisted each other in their works.

Rufinus' wife, a frail, ailing little woman, with a small face and rather hollow cheeks, who must once have been very attractive and engaging, might have passed for his daughter; she was, in fact, twenty years younger than her husband. It was evident that she had suffered much in the course of her life, but had taken it patiently and all for the best. Her restless husband had caused her the greatest trouble and alarms, and yet she exerted herself to the utmost to make his life pleasant. She had the art of keeping every obstacle and discomfort out of his way, and guessed with wonderful instinct what would help him, comfort him, and bring him joy. The physician declared that her stooping attitude, her bent head, and the enquiring expression of her bright, black eyes were the result of her constant efforts to discover even a straw that might bring harm to Rufinus if his callous and restless foot should tread on it.

Their daughter Pulcheria, was commonly called

"Pul" for short, to save time, excepting when the old man spoke of her by preference as "the poor child."

There was at all times something compassionate in his attitude towards his daughter; for he rarely looked at her without asking himself what could become of this beloved child when he, who was so much older, should have closed his eyes in death and his Joanna perhaps should soon have followed him; while Pulcheria, seeing her mother take such care of her father that nothing was left for her to do, regarded herself as the most superfluous creature on earth and would have been ready at any time to lay down her life for her parents, for the abbess, for her faith, for the leech; nay, and though she had known her for no more than two days, even for Paula. However, she was a very pretty, well-grown girl, with great open blue eyes and a dreamy expression, and magnificent red-gold hair which could hardly be matched in all Egypt. Her father had long known of her desire to enter the convent as a novice and become a nursing sister; but though he had devoted his whole life to a similar impulse, he had more than once positively refused to accede to her wishes, for he must ere long be gathered to his fathers and then her mother, while she survived him, would want some one else to wear herself out for.

Just now "Pul" was longing less than usual to take the veil; for she had found in Paula a being before whom she felt small indeed, and to whom her unenviable soul, yearning and striving for the highest, could look up in satisfied and rapturous admiration. In addition to this, there were under her own roof two sufferers needing her care: Rustem, the wounded Masdakite, and the Persian girl. Neforis, who since the

fearful hour of her husband's death had seemed stunned and indifferent to all the claims of daily life, living only in her memories of the departed, had been more than willing to leave to the physician the disposal of these two and their removal from her house.

In the evening after Paula's arrival Philippus had consulted with his friends as to the reception of these new guests, and the old man had interrupted him, as soon as he raised the question of pecuniary indemnification, exclaiming:

"They are all very welcome. If they have wounds, we will make them heal; if their heads are turned, we will screw them the right way round; if their souls are dark, we will light up a flame in them. If the fair Paula takes a fancy to us, she and her old woman may stay as long as it suits her and us. We made her welcome with all our hearts; but, on the other hand, you must understand that we must be free to bid her farewell — as free as she is to depart. It is impossible ever to know exactly how such grand folks will get on with humble ones, and as sure as I long to be quit of this piece of lumber I might one day take it into my head to leave it to the owls and jackals and fare forth, staff in hand. — You know me. As to indemnification — we understand each other. A full purse hangs behind the sick, and the sound one has ten times more than she needs, so they may pay. You must decide how much; only — for the women's sake, and I mean it seriously — be liberal. You know what I need Mammon for; and it would be well for Joanna if she had less need to turn over every silver piece before she spends it in the housekeeping. Besides, the lady herself will be more comfortable if she contributes to pay

for the food and drink. It would ill beseem the daughter of Thomas to lie down every evening under the roof of such birds of passage as we are with thanks for favors received. When each one pays his share we stand on a footing of give and take; and if either one feels any particular affection to another it is not strangled by 'thanks' or 'take it;' it is love for love's sake and a joy to both parties."

"Amen," said the leech; and Paula had been quite satisfied by her friend's arrangements.

By the next day she felt herself one of the household, though she every hour found something that could not fail to strike her as strange.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Paula had eaten with Rufinus and his family after the funeral ceremonies, she went into the garden with Pul and the old man — it had been impossible to induce Perpetua to sit at the same table with her mistress. The sun was now low, and its level beams gave added lustre to the colors of the flowers and to the sheen of the thick, metallic foliage of the south, which the drought and scorching heat had still spared. A bright-hued humped ox and an ass were turning the wheel which raised cooling waters from the Nile and poured them into a large tank from which they flowed through narrow rivulets to irrigate the beds. This toil was now very laborious, for the river had fallen to so low a level as to give cause for anxiety, even at this season of extreme ebb. Numbers of birds with ruffled feathers,

with little splints on their legs, or with sadly drooping heads, were going to roost in small cages hung from the branches to protect them from cats and other beasts of prey; to each, as he went by, Rufinus spoke a kindly word, or chirruped to encourage and cheer it. Aromatic odors filled the garden, and rural silence; every object shone in golden glory, even the black back of the negro working at the water-wheel, and the white and yellow skin of the ox; while the clear voices of the choir of nuns thrilled through the convent-grove. Pul listened, turning her face to meet it, and crossing her arms over her heart. Her father pointed to her as he said to Paula:

"That is where her heart is. May she ever have her God before her eyes! That cannot but be the best thing for a woman. Still, among such as we are, we must hold to the rule: Every man for his fellow-man on earth, in the name of the merciful Lord! — Can our wise and reasonable Father in Heaven desire that brother should neglect brother, or — as in our case — a child forsake its parents?"

"Certainly not," replied Paula. "For my own part, nothing keeps me from taking the veil but my hope of finding my long-lost father; I, like your Pulcheria, have often longed for the peace of the cloister. — How piously rapt your daughter stands there! What a sweet and touching sight! — In my heart all was dark and desolate; but here, among you all, it is already beginning to feel lighter, and here, if anywhere, I shall recover what I lost in my other home. — Happy child! Could you not fancy, as she stands there in the evening light, that the pure devotion which fills her soul, radiated from her? If I were not afraid of disturbing

her, and if I were worthy, how gladly would I join my prayers to hers!"

"You have a part in them as it is," replied the old man with a smile. "At this moment St. Cecilia appears to her under the guise of your features. We will ask her—you will see."

"No, leave her alone!" entreated Paula with a blush, and she led Rufinus away to the other end of the garden.

They soon reached a spot where a high hedge of thorny shrubs parted the old man's plot from that of Susannah. Rufinus here pricked up his ears and then angrily exclaimed:

"As sure as I long to be quit of this lumber, they are cutting my hedge again! Only last evening I caught one of the slaves just as he was going to work on the branches; but how could I get at the black rascal through the thorns? It was to make a peep-hole for curious eyes, or for spies, for the Patriarch knows how to make use of a petticoat; but I will be even with them! Do you go on, pray, as if you had seen and heard nothing; I will fetch my whip."

The old man hurried away, and Paula was about to obey him; but scarcely had he disappeared when she heard herself called in a shrill girl's voice through a gap in the hedge, and looking round, she spied a pretty face between the boughs which had yesterday been forced asunder by a man's hands—like a picture wreathed with greenery.

Even in the twilight she recognized it at once, and when Katharina put her curly head forward, and said in a beseeching tone: "May I get through, and will you listen to me?" she gladly signified her consent.

The water-wagtail, heedless of Paula's hand held out to help her, slipped through the gap so nimbly that it was evident that she had not long ceased surmounting such obstacles in her games with Mary. As swift as the wind she came down on her feet, holding out her arms to rush at Paula; but she suddenly let them fall in visible hesitancy, and drew back a step. Paula, however, saw her embarrassment; she drew the girl to her, kissed her forehead, and gaily exclaimed:

"Trespassing! And why could you not come in by the gate? Here comes my host with his hippopotamus thong. — Stop, stop, good Rufinus, for the breach effected in your flowery wall was intended against me and not against you. There stands the hostile power, and I should be greatly surprised if you did not recognize her as a neighbor?"

"Recognize her?" said the old man, whose wrath was quickly appeased. "Do we know each other, fair damsel — yes or no? It is an open question."

"Of course!" cried Katharina, "I have seen you a hundred times from the gnat-tower."

"You have had less pleasure than I should have had, if I had been so happy as to see you. — We came across each other about a year ago. I was then so happy as to find you in my large peach-tree, which to this day takes the liberty of growing over your garden-plot."

"I was but a child then," laughed Katharina, who very well remembered how the old man, whose handsome white head she had always particularly admired, had spied her out among the boughs of his peach-tree and had advised her, with a good-natured nod, to enjoy herself there.

"A child!" repeated Rufinus. "And now we are

quite grown up and do not care to climb so high, but creep humbly through our neighbor's hedge."

"Then you really are strangers?" cried Paula in surprise. "And have you never met Pulcheria, Katharina?"

"Pul? — oh, how glad I should have been to call her!" said Katharina. "I have been on the point of it a hundred times; for her mere appearance makes one fall in love with her, — but my mother. . . ."

"Well, and what has your mother got to say against her neighbors?" asked Rufinus. "I believe we are peaceable folks who do no one any harm."

"No, no, God forbid! But my mother has her own way of viewing things; you and she are strangers still, and as you are so rarely to be seen in church. . . ."

"She naturally takes us for the ungodly. Tell her that she is mistaken, and if you are Paula's friend and you come to see her — but prettily, through the gate, and not through the hedge, for it will be closely twined again by to-morrow morning — if you come here, I say, you will find that we have a great deal to do and a great many creatures to nurse and care for — poor human creatures some of them, and some with fur or feathers, just as it comes; and man serves his Maker if he only makes life easier to the beings that come in his way; for He loves them all. Tell that to your mother, little wagtail, and come again very often."

"Thank you very much. But let me ask you, if I may, where you heard that odious nickname? I hate it."

"From the same person who told you the secret that my Pulcheria is called Pul!" said Rufinus; he laughed and bowed and left the two girls together.

"What a dear old man!" cried Katharina. "Oh, I know quite well how he spends his days! And his pretty wife and Pul—I know them all. How often I have watched them—I will show you the place one day! I can see over the whole garden, only not what goes on near the convent on the other side of the house, or beyond those trees. You know my mother; if she once dislikes any one. . . But Pul, you understand, would be such a friend for me!"

"Of course she would," replied Paula. "And a girl of your age must chose older companions than little Mary."

"Oh, you shall not say a word against her!" cried Katharina eagerly. "She is only ten years old, but many a grown-up person is not so upright or so capable as I have found her during these last few miserable days."

"Poor child!" said Paula stroking her hair.

At this a bitter sob broke suddenly and passionately from Katharina; she tried with all her might to suppress it, but could not succeed. Her fit of weeping was so violent that she could not utter a word, till Paula had led her to a bench under a spreading sycamore, had induced her with gentle force to sit down by her side, clasping her in her arms like a suffering child, and speaking to her words of comfort and encouragement.

Birds without number were going to rest in the dense branches overhead, owls and bats had begun their nocturnal raids, the sky put on its spangled glory of gold and silver stars, from the western end of the town came the jackals' bark as they left their lurking-places among the ruined houses and stole out in search

of prey, the heavy dew, falling through the mild air silently covered the leaves, the grass, and the flowers; the garden was more powerfully fragrant now than during the day-time, and Paula felt that it was high time to take refuge from the mists that came up from the shallow stream. But still she lingered while the little maiden poured out all that weighed upon her, all she repented of, believing she could never atone for it; and then all she had gone through, thinking it must break her heart, and all she still had to live down and drive out of her mind.

She told Paula how Orion had wooed her, how much she loved him, how her heart had been tortured by jealousy of her, Paula, and how she had allowed herself to be led away into bearing false witness before the judges. And then she went on to say it was Mary who had first opened her eyes to the abyss by which she was standing. In the afternoon after the death of the Mukaukas she had gone with her mother to the governor's house to join in her friends' lamentations. She had at once asked after Mary, but had not been allowed to see her, for she was still in bed and very feverish. She was then on her way to the cool hall when she heard her mother's voice — not in grief, but angry and vehement — so, thinking it would be more becoming to keep out of the way, she wandered off into the pillared vestibule opening towards the Nile. She would not for worlds have met Orion, and was terribly afraid she might do so, but as she went out, for it was still quite light, there she found him — and in what a state! He was sitting all in a heap, dressed in black, with his head buried in his hands. He had not observed her presence; but she pitied him deeply, for

though it was very hot he was trembling in every limb, and his strong frame shuddered repeatedly. She had therefore spoken to him, begging him to be comforted, at which he had started to his feet in dismay, and had pushed his unkempt hair back from his face, looking so pale, so desperate, that she had been quite terrified and could not manage to bring out the consoling words she had ready. For some time neither of them had uttered a syllable, but at length he had pulled himself together as if for some great deed, he came slowly towards her and laid his hands on her shoulders with a solemn dignity which no one certainly had ever before seen in him. He stood gazing into her face — his eyes were red with much weeping — and he sighed from his very heart the two words:

“Unhappy Child!” — She could hear them still sounding in her ears.

And he was altered: from head to foot quite different, like a stranger. His voice, even, sounded changed and deeper than usual as he went on:

“Child, child! Perhaps I have given much pain in my life without knowing it; but you have certainly suffered most through me, for I have made you, an innocent, trusting creature, my accomplice in crime. The great sin we both committed has been visited on me alone, but the punishment is a hundred — a thousand times too heavy!”

“And with this,” Katharina went on, “he covered his face with his hands, threw himself on the couch again, and groaned and sighed. Then he sprang up once more, crying out so loud and passionately that I felt as if I must die of grief and pity: ‘Forgive me if you can! Forgive me, wholly, freely. I want it — you

must, you must!" I was going to run up to him and throw my arms round him and forgive him everything, his trouble distressed me so much; but he gravely pushed me away—not roughly or sternly, and he said that there was an end of all love-making and betrothal between us—that I was young, and that I should be able to forget him. He would still be a true friend to me and to my mother, and the more we required of him the more gladly would he serve us.

"I was about to answer him, but he hastily interrupted me and said firmly and decisively: 'Lovable as you are, I cannot love you as you deserve; for it is my duty to tell you, I have another and a greater love in my heart—my first and my last; and though once in my life I have proved myself a wretch, still, it was but once; and I would rather endure your anger, and hurt both you and myself now, than continue this unrighteous tie and cheat you and others.'—At this I was greatly startled, and asked: 'Paula?' However, he did not answer, but bent over me and touched my forehead with his lips, just as my father often kissed me, and then went quickly out into the garden.

"Just then my mother came up, as red as a poppy and panting for breath: she took me by the hand without a word, dragged me into the chariot after her, and then cried out quite beside herself—she could not even shed a tear for rage:

"'What insolence! what unheard-of behavior! How can I find the heart to tell you, poor sacrificed lamb. . .'

"And she would have gone on, but that I would not let her finish; I told her at once that I knew all, and happily I was able to keep quite calm. I had some

bad hours at home; and when Nilus came to us yesterday, after the opening of the will, and brought me the pretty little gold box with turquoises and pearls that I have always admired, and told me that the good Mukaukas had written with his own hand, in his last will, that it was to be given to me 'his bright little Katharina,' my mother insisted on my not taking it and sent it back to Neforis, though I begged and prayed to keep it. And of course I shall never go to that house again; indeed my mother talks of quitting Memphis altogether and settling in Constantinople or some other city under Christian rule. Then our nice, pretty house must be given up, and our dear, lovely garden be sold to the peasant folk, my mother says. It was just the same a year and a half ago with Memnon's palace. His garden was turned into a corn-field, and the splendid ground-floor rooms, with their mosaics and pictures, are now dirty stables for cows and sheep, and pigs are fed in the rooms that belonged to Hathor and Dorothea. Good Heavens! And they were my dearest friends!—And I am never to play with Mary any more; and mother has not a kind word for any living soul, hardly even for me, and my old nurse is as deaf as a mole! Am I not a really miserable, lonely creature? And if you, even you, will have nothing to say to me, who is there in all Memphis whom I can trust in? But you will not be so cruel, will you? And it will not be for long, for my mother really means to go away. You are older than I am, of course, and much graver and wiser. . ."

"I will be kind to you, child; but try to make friends with Pulcheria!"

"Gladly, gladly. But then my mother! I should

get on very well by myself if it were not. . . Well, you yourself heard what Orion said to me, that time in the avenue. He surely loved me a little! What sweet, tender names he gave me then. Oh God! no man can speak like that to any one he is not fond of! — And he is rich himself; it cannot have been only my fortune that bewitched him. And does he look like a man who would allow himself to be parted from a girl by his mother, whether he would or no?”

“He was always fond of me I think; but then, afterwards, he remembered what a high position he had to fill and regarded me as too little and too childish. Oh, how many tears I have shed over being so absurdly little! A Water-wagtail — that is what I shall always be. Your old host called me so; and if a man like Orion feels that he must have a stately wife I can hardly blame him. That other one whom he thinks he loves better than he does me is tall and beautiful and majestic — like you; and I have always told myself that his future wife ought to look like you. It is all over between him and me, and I will submit humbly; but at the same time I cannot help thinking that when he came home he thought me pretty and attractive, and had a real fancy and liking for me. Yes, it was so, it certainly was so! — But then he saw that other one, and I cannot compare with her. She is indeed the woman he wants, — and that other, Paula, is yourself. Yes, indeed, you yourself; an inner voice tells me so. And I tell you truly, you may quite believe me: it is a pain no doubt, but I can be glad of it too. I should hate any mere girl to whom he held out his hand — but, if you are that other — and if you are his wife. . .”

"Nonsense," exclaimed Paula decidedly. "Consider what you are saying. When Orion tempted you to perjure yourself, did he behave as my friend or as my foe, my bitterest and most implacable enemy?"

"Before the judges, to be sure. . ." replied the girl looking down thoughtfully. But she soon looked up again, fixed her eyes on Paula's face with a sparkling, determined glance, and frankly and unhesitatingly exclaimed: "And you? — In spite of it all he is so handsome, so clever, so manly. You can hardly help it — you love him!"

Paula withdrew her arm, which had been round Katharina, and answered candidly.

"Until to-day, at the funeral, I hated and abominated him; but there, by his father's tomb, he struck me as a new man, and I found it easy to forgive him in my heart."

"Then you mean to say that you do not love him?" urged Katharina, clasping her friend's round arm with her slender fingers.

Paula started to feel how icy cold her hand was. The moon was up, the stars rose higher and higher, so, simply saying: "Come away," she rose. "It must be within an hour of midnight," she added. "Your mother will be anxious about you."

"Only an hour of midnight!" repeated the girl in alarm. "Good Heavens, I shall have a scolding! She is still playing draughts with the Bishop, no doubt, as she does every evening. Good-bye then for the present. The shortest way is through the hedge again."

"No," said Paula firmly, "you are no longer a child; you are grown up, and must feel it and show it. You are not to creep through the bushes, but to go

home by the gate. Rufinus and I will go with you and explain to your mother. . ."

"No, no!" cried Katharina in terror. "She is as angry with you as she is with them. Only yesterday she forbid. . ."

"Forbid you to come to me?" asked Paula. "Does she believe. . ."

"That it was for your sake that Orion . . . Yes, she is only too glad to lay all the blame on you. But now that I have talked to you I . . . Look, do you see that light? It is in her sitting-room."

And, before Paula could prevent her, she ran to the hedge and slipped through the gap as nimbly as a weasel.

Paula looked after her with mingled feelings, and then went back to the house, and to bed. Katharina's story kept her awake for a long time, and the suspicion — nay almost the conviction — that it was herself, indeed, who had aroused that "great love" in Orion's heart gave her no rest. If it were she? There, under her hand was the instrument of revenge on the miscreant; she could make him taste of all the bitterness he had brewed for her aching spirit. But which of them would the punishment hurt most sorely: him or herself? Had not the little girl's confidences revealed a world of rapture to her and her longing heart? No, no. It would be too humiliating to allow the same hand that had smitten her so ruthlessly to uplift her to heaven; it would be treason against herself.

Slumber overtook her in the midst of these conflicting feelings and thoughts, and towards morning she had a dream which, even by daylight, haunted her and made her shudder.

She saw Orion coming towards her, as pale as death, robed in mourning, pacing slowly on a coal-black horse; she had not the strength to fly, and without speaking to her or looking at her, he lifted her high in the air like a child, and placed her in front of him on the horse. She put forth all her strength to get free and dismount, but he clasped her with both arms like iron clamps and quelled her efforts. Life itself would not have seemed too great a price for escape from this constraint; but, the more wildly she fought, the more closely she was held by the silent and pitiless horseman. At their feet flowed the swirling river, but Orion did not seem to notice it, and without moving his lips, he coolly guided the steed towards the water. Beside herself now with horror and dread, she implored him to turn away; but he did not heed her, and went on unmoved into the midst of the stream. Her terror increased to an agonizing pitch as the horse bore her deeper and deeper into the water; of her own free will she threw her arms round the rider's neck; his paleness vanished, his cheeks gained a ruddy hue, his lips sought hers in a kiss; and, in the midst of the very anguish of death, she felt a thrill of rapture that she had never known before. She could have gone on thus for ever, even to destruction; and, in fact, they were still sinking—she felt the water rising breast high, but she cared not. Not a word had either of them spoken. Suddenly she felt urged to break the silence, and as if she could not help it she asked: "Am I the other?" At this the waves surged down on them from all sides; a whirlpool dragged away the horse, spinning him round, and with him Orion and herself, a shrill blast swept past them, and then the current and the waves, the

roaring of the whirlpool, the howling of the storm — all at once and together, as with one voice, louder than all else and filling her ears, shouted: "Thou!" — Only Orion remained speechless. An eddy caught the horse and sucked him under, a wave carried her away from him, she was sinking, sinking, and stretched out her arms with longing. — A cold dew stood on her brow as she slept, and the nurse, waking her from her uneasy dream, shook her head as she said:

"Why, child? What ails you? You have been calling Orion again and again, at first in terror and then so tenderly. — Yes, believe me, tenderly."

CHAPTER XX.

IN the neat rooms which Rufinus' wife had made ready for her sick guests perfect peace reigned, and it was noon. A soft twilight fell through the thick green curtains which mitigated the sunshine, and the nurses had lately cleared away after the morning meal. Paula was moistening the bandage on the Masdakite's head, and Pulcheria was busy in the adjoining room with Mandane, who obeyed the physician's instructions with intelligent submission and showed no signs of insanity.

Paula was still spellbound by her past dream. She was possessed by such unrest that, quite against her wont, she could not long remain quiet, and when Pulcheria came to her to tell her this or that, she listened with so little attention and sympathy that the humble-minded girl, fearing to disturb her, withdrew to her

patient's bed-side and waited quietly till her new divinity called her.

In fact, it was not without reason that Paula gave herself up to a certain anxiety; for, if she was not mistaken, Orion must necessarily present himself to hand over to her the remainder of her fortune; and though even yesterday, on her way from the cemetery, she had said to herself that she must and would refuse to meet him, the excitement produced by Katharina's story and her subsequent dream had confirmed her in her determination.

Perpetua awaited Orion's visit on the ground-floor, charged to announce him to Rufinus and not to her mistress. The old man had willingly undertaken to receive the money as her representative; for Philippus had not concealed from her that he had acquainted him with the circumstances under which Paula had quitted the governor's house, describing Orion as a man whom she had good reason for desiring to avoid.

By about two hours after noon Paula's restlessness had increased so much that now and then she wandered out of the sick-room, which looked over the garden, to watch the Nile-quay from the window of the anteroom; for he might arrive by either way. She never thought of the security of her property; but the question arose in her mind as to whether it were not actually a breach of duty to avoid the agitation it would cost her to meet her cousin face to face. On this point no one could advise her, not even Perpetua; her own mother could hardly have understood all her feelings on such an occasion. She scarcely knew herself indeed; for hitherto she had never failed, even in the most difficult cases, to know at once and without

long reflection, what to do and to leave undone, what under special circumstances was right or wrong. But now she felt herself a yielding reed, a leaf tossed hither and thither; and every time she set her teeth and clenched her hands, determined to think calmly and to reason out the "for" and "against," her mind wandered away again, while the memory of her dream, of Orion as he stood by his father's grave — of Katharina's tale of "the other," and the fearful punishment which he had to suffer, nay indeed, certainly had suffered — came and went in her mind like the flocks of birds over the Nile, whose dipping and soaring had often passed like a fluttering veil between her eye and some object on the further shore.

It was three hours past noon, and she had returned to the sick-room, when she thought that she heard hoofs in the garden and hurried to the window once more. Her heart had not beat more wildly when the dog had flown at her and Hiram that fateful night, than it did now as she hearkened to the approach of a horseman, still hidden from her gaze by the shrubs. It must be Orion — but why did he not dismount? No, it could not be he; his tall figure would have overtopped the shrubbery which was of low growth.

She did not know her host's friends; it was one of them very likely. Now the horse had turned the corner; now it was coming up the path from the front gate; now Rufinus had gone forth to meet the visitor — and it was not Orion, but his secretary, a much smaller man, who slipped off a mule that she at once recognized, threw the reins to a lad, handed something to the old man, and then dropped on to a bench to yawn and stretch his legs.

Then she saw Rufinus come towards the house.

Had Orion charged this messenger to bring her her possessions? She thought this somewhat insulting, and her blood boiled with wrath. But there could be no question here of a surrender of property; for what her host was holding in his hand was nothing heavy, but a quite small object; probably, nay, certainly a roll of papyrus. He was coming up the narrow stairs, so she ran out to meet him, blushing as though she were doing something wrong. The old man observed this and said, as he handed her the scroll:

"You need not be frightened, daughter of a hero. The young lord is not here himself, he prefers, it would seem, to treat with you by letter; and it is best so for both parties."

Paula nodded agreement; she took the roll, and then, while she tore the silken tie from the seal, she turned her back on the old man; for she felt that the blood had faded from her face, and her hands were trembling.

"The messenger awaits an answer," remarked Rufinus, before she began to read it. "I shall be below and at your service." He left; Paula returned to the sick-room, and leaning against the frame of the casement, read as follows, with eager agitation:

"Orion, the son of George the Mukaukas who sleeps in the Lord, to his cousin the daughter of the noble Thomas of Damascus, greeting.

"I have destroyed several letters that I had written to you before this one." Paula shrugged her shoulders incredulously. "I hope I may succeed better this time in saying what I feel to be indispensable for your wel-

fare and my own. I have both to crave a favor and offer counsel."

"Counsel! he!" thought the girl with a scornful curl of the lips, as she went on. "May the memory of the man who loved you as his daughter, and who on his death-bed wished for nothing so much as to see you — averse as he was to your creed — and bless you as his daughter indeed, as his son's wife, — may the remembrance of that just man so far prevail over your indignant and outraged soul that these words from the most wretched man on earth, for that am I, Paula, may not be left unread. Grant me the last favor I have to ask of you — I demand it in my father's name."

"Demand!" repeated the damsel; her cheeks flamed, her eye sparkled angrily, and her hands clutched the opposite sides of the letter as though to tear it across. But the next words: "Do not fear," checked her hasty impulse — she smoothed out the papyrus and read on with growing excitement:

"Do not fear that I shall address you as a lover — as the man for whom there is but one woman on earth. And that one can only be she whom I have so deeply injured, whom I fought with as frantic, relentless, and cruel weapons as ever I used against a foe of my own sex."

"But one," murmured the girl; she passed her hand across her brow, and a faint smile of happy pride dwelt on her lips as she went on:

"I shall love you as long as breath animates this crushed and wretched heart."

Again the letter was in danger of destruction, but again it escaped unharmed, and Paula's expression be-

came one of calm and tender pleasure as she read to the end of Orion's clearly written epistle :

"I am fully conscious that I have forfeited your esteem, nay even all good feeling towards me, by my own fault ; and that, unless divine love works some miracle in your heart, I have sacrificed all joy on earth. You are revenged ; for it was for your sake — understand that — for your sake alone, that my beloved and dying father withdrew the blessings he had heaped on my remorseful head, and in wrath that was only too just at the recreant who had desecrated the judgment-seat of his ancestors, turned that blessing to a curse."

Paula turned pale as she read. This then was what Katharina had meant. This was what had so changed his appearance, and perhaps, too, his whole inward being. And this, this bore the stamp of truth, this could not be a lie — it was for her sake that a father's curse had blighted his only son ! How had it all happened ? Had Philippus failed to observe it, or had he held his peace out of respect for the secrets of another ? — Poor man, poor young man ! She must see him, must speak to him. She could not have a moment's ease till she knew how it was that her uncle, a tender father. — But she must go on, quickly to the end :

"I come to you only as what I am : a heart-broken man, too young to give myself over for lost, and at the same time determined to make use of all that remains to me of the steadfast will, the talents, and the self-respect of my forefathers to render me worthy of them, and I implore you to grant me a brief interview. Not a word, not a look shall betray the passion within and which threatens to destroy me.

"You must on no account fail to read what follows,

since it is of no small real importance even to you. In the first place restitution must be made to you of all of your inheritance which the deceased was able to rescue and to add to by his fatherly stewardship. In these agitated times it will be a matter of some difficulty to invest this capital safely and to good advantage. Consider: Just as the Arabs drove out the Byzantines, the Byzantines might drive them out again in their turn. The Persians, though stricken to the earth, the Avars, or some other people whose very name is as yet unknown to history, may succeed our present rulers, who, only ten years since, were regarded as a mere handful of unsettled camel-drivers, caravan-leaders, and poverty-stricken desert-tribes. The safety of your fortune would be less difficult to provide for if, as was formerly the case here, we could entrust it to the merchants of Alexandria. But one great house after another is being ruined there, and all security is at an end. As to hiding or burying your possessions, as most Egyptians do in these hard times, it is impossible, for the same reason as prevents our depositing it on interest in the state land-register. You must be able to get it at the shortest notice; since you might at some time wish to quit Egypt in haste with all your possessions.

“These are matters with which a woman cannot be familiar. I would therefore propose that you should leave the arrangement of them to us men; to Philip-pus, the physician, Rufinus, your host — who is, I am assured, an honest man — and to our experienced and trustworthy treasurer Nilus, whom you know as an incorruptible judge.

“I propose that the business should be settled to-morrow in the house of Rufinus. You can be present

or not, as you please. If we men agree in our ideas I beg you—I beseech you to grant me an interview apart. It will last but a few minutes, and the only subject of discussion will be a matter—an exchange by which you will recover something you value and have lost, and grant me I hope, if not your esteem, at any rate a word of forgiveness. I need it sorely, believe me, Paula; it is as indispensable to me as the breath of life, if I am to succeed in the work I have begun on myself. If you have prevailed on yourself to read through this letter, simply answer ‘Yes’ by my messenger, to relieve me from torturing uncertainty. If you do not—which God forefend for both our sakes, Nilus shall this very day carry to you all that belongs to you. But, if you have read these lines, I will make my appearance to-morrow, at two hours after noon, with Nilus to explain to the others the arrangement of which I have spoken. God be with you and infuse some ruth into your proud and noble soul!”

Paula drew a deep breath as the hand holding this momentous epistle dropped by her side; she stood for some time by the window, lost in grave meditation. Then calling Pulcheria, she begged her to tend her patient, too, for a short time. The girl looked up at her with rapt admiration in her clear eyes, and asked sympathetically why she was so pale; Paula kissed her lips and eyes, and saying affectionately: “Good, happy child!” she retired to her own room on the opposite side of the house. There she once more read through the letter.

Oh yes; this was Orion as she had known him after his return till the evening of that never-to-be-forgotten water-party. He was, indeed, a poet; nature her-

self had made it so easy to him to seduce unguarded souls into a belief in him! And yet no! This letter was honestly meant. Philippus knew men well; Orion really had a heart, a warm heart. Not the most reckless of criminals could mock at the curse hurled at him by a beloved father in his last moments. And, as she once more read the sentence in which he told her that it was his crime as an unjust Judge towards her that had turned the dying man's blessing to a curse, she shuddered and reflected that their relative attitude was now reversed, and that he had suffered more and worse through her than she had through him. His pale face, as she had seen it in the Necropolis, came back vividly to her mind, and if he could have stood before her at this moment she would have flown to him, have offered him a compassionate hand, and have assured him that the woes she had brought upon him filled her with the deepest and sincerest pity.

That morning she had asked the Masdakite whether he had besought Heaven to grant him a speedy recovery, and the man replied that Persians never prayed for any particular blessing, but only for "that which was good;" for that none but the Omnipotent knew what was good for mortals. How wise! For in this instance might not the most terrible blow that could fall on a son — his father's curse — prove a blessing? It was undoubtedly that curse which had led him to look into his soul and to start on this new path. She saw him treading it, she longed to believe in his conversion — and she did believe in it. In this letter he spoke of his love; he even asked her hand. Only yesterday this would have roused her wrath; to-day she could forgive him; for she could forgive anything to this unhappy

soul — to the man on whom she had brought such deep anguish. Her heart could now beat high in the hope of seeing him again; nay, it even seemed to her that the youth, whose return had been hailed with such welcome and who had so powerfully attracted her, had only now grown and ripened to full and perfect manhood through his sin, his penitence, and his suffering.

And how noble a task it would be to assist him in seeking the right way, and in becoming what he aspired to be!

The prudent care he had given to her worldly welfare merited her gratitude. What could he mean by the "exchange" he proposed? The "great love" of which he had spoken to Katharina was legible in every line of his letter, and any woman can forgive any man — were he a sinner, and a scarecrow into the bargain — for his audacity in loving her. Oh! that he might but set his heart on her — for hers, it was vain to deny it, was strongly drawn to him. Still she would not call it Love that stirred within her; it could only be the holy impulse to point out to him the highest goal of life and smooth the path for him. The pale horseman who had clutched her in her dream should not drag her away; no, she would joyfully lift him up to the highest pinnacle attainable by a brave and noble man.

So her thoughts ran, and her cheeks flushed as, with swift decision, she opened her trunk, took out papyrus, writing implements and a seal, and seated herself at a little desk which Rufinus had placed for her in the window, to write her answer.

At this a sudden fervent longing for Orion came over her. She made a great effort to shake it off; still, she felt that in writing to him it was impossible that she

should find the right words, and as she replaced the papyrus in the chest and looked at the seal a strange thing happened to her; for the device on her father's well-known ring: a star above two crossed swords — perchance the star of Orion — caught her eye, with the motto in Greek: "The immortal gods have set sweat before virtue," meaning that the man who aims at being virtuous must grudge neither sweat nor toil.

She closed her trunk with a pleased smile, for the motto round the star was, she felt, of good augury. At the same time she resolved to speak to Orion, taking these words, which her forefathers had adopted from old Hesiod, as her text. She hastened down stairs, crossed the garden, passing by Rufinus, his wife and the physician, awoke the secretary who had long since dropped asleep, and enjoined him to say: "Yes" to his master, as he expected. However, before the messenger had mounted his mule, she begged him to wait yet a few minutes and returned to the two men; for she had forgotten in her eagerness to speak to them of Orion's plans. They were both willing to meet him at the hour proposed and, while Philippus went to tell the messenger that they would expect his master on the next day, the old man looked at Paula with undisguised satisfaction and said:

"We were fearing lest the news from the governor's house should have spoilt your happy mood, but, thank God, you look as if you had just come from a refreshing bath. — What do you say, Joanna? Twenty years ago such an inmate here would have made you jealous? Or was there never a place for such evil passions in your dove-like soul?"

"Nonsense!" laughed the matron. "How can I

tell how many fair beings you have gazed after, wanderer that you are in all the wide world far away?"

"Well, old woman, but as sure as man is the standard of all things, nowhere that I have carried my staff, have I met with a goddess like this!"

"I certainly have not either, living here like a snail in its shell," said Dame Joanna, fixing her bright eyes on Paula with fervent admiration.

CHAPTER XXI.

THAT evening Rufinus was sitting in the garden with his wife and daughter and their friend Philippus. Paula, too, was there, and from time to time she stroked Pulcheria's silky golden hair, for the girl had seated herself at her feet, leaning her head against Paula's knee.

The moon was full, and it was so light out of doors that they could see each other plainly, so Rufinus' proposition that they should remain to watch an eclipse which was to take place an hour before midnight found all the more ready acceptance because the air was pleasant. The men had been discussing the expected phenomenon, lamenting that the Church should still lend itself to the superstitions of the populace by regarding it as of evil omen, and organizing a penitential procession for the occasion to implore God to avert all ill. Rufinus declared that it was blasphemy against the Almighty to interpret events happening in the course of eternal law and calculable beforehand, as a threatening sign from Him; as though man's deserts

had any connection with the courses of the sun and moon. The Bishop and all the priests of the province were to head the procession, and thus a simple natural phenomenon was forced in the minds of the people into a significance it did not possess.

"And if the little comet which my old foster father discovered last week continues to increase," added the physician, "so that its tail spreads over a portion of the sky, the panic will reach its highest pitch; I can see already that they will behave like mad creatures."

"But a comet really does portend war, drought, plague, and famine," said Pulcheria, with full conviction; and Paula added:

"So I have always believed."

"But very wrongly," replied the leech. "There are a thousand reasons to the contrary; and it is a crime to confirm the mob in such a superstition. It fills them with grief and alarms; and, would you believe it—such anguish of mind, especially when the Nile is so low and there is more sickness than usual, gives rise to numberless forms of disease? We shall have our hands full, Rufinus."

"I am yours to command," replied the old man. "But at the same time, if the tailed wanderer must do some mischief, I would rather it should break folks' arms and legs than turn their brains."

"What a wish!" exclaimed Paula. "But you often say things—and I see things about you too—which seem to me extraordinary. Yesterday you promised. . . ."

"To explain to you why I gather about me so many of God's creatures who have to struggle under the burden of life as cripples, or with injured limbs."

"Just so," replied Paula. "Nothing can be more truly merciful than to render life bearable to such hapless beings. . . ."

"But still, you think," interrupted the eager old man, "that this noble motive alone would hardly account for the old oddity's riding his hobby so hard. — Well, you are right. From my earliest youth the structure of the bones in man and beast has captivated me exceedingly; and just as collectors of horns, when once they have a complete series of every variety of stag, roe, and gazelle, set to work with fresh zeal to find deformed or monstrous growths, so I have found pleasure in studying every kind of malformation and injury in the bones of men and beasts."

"And to remedy them," added Philippus. "It has been his passion from childhood.

"And the passion has grown upon me since I broke my own hip bone and know what it means," the old man went on. "With the help of my fellow-student there, from a mere dilettante I became a practised surgeon; and, what is more, I am one of those who serve Esculapius at my own expense. However, there are accessory reasons for which I have chosen such strange companions: deformed slaves are cheap and besides that, certain investigations afford me inestimable and peculiar satisfaction. But this cannot interest a young girl."

"Indeed it does!" cried Paula. "So far as I have understood Philippus when he explains some details of natural history. . . ."

"Stay," laughed Rufinus, "our friend will take good care not to explain this. He regards it as folly, and all he will admit is that no surgeon or student

could wish for better, more willing, or more amusing house-mates than my cripples."

"They are grateful to you," cried Paula.

"Grateful?" asked the old man. "That is true sometimes, no doubt; still, gratitude is a tribute on which no wise man ever reckons. Now I have told you enough; for the sake of Philippus we will let the rest pass."

"No, no," said Paula putting up entreating hands, and Rufinus answered gaily :

"Who can refuse you anything? I will cut it short, but you must pay good heed. — Well then : Man is the standard of all things. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, I often hear you say so. Things you mean are only what they seem to us."

"To us, you say, because we — you and I and the rest of us here — are sound in body and mind. And we must regard all things — being God's handiwork — as by nature sound and normal. Thus we are justified in requiring that man, who gives the standard for them shall, first and foremost, himself be sound and normal. Can a carpenter measure straight planks properly with a crooked or sloping rod?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you will understand how I came to ask myself: 'Do sickly, crippled, and deformed men measure things by a different standard to that of sound men? And might it not be a useful task to investigate how their estimates differ from ours?'"

"And have your researches among your cripples led to any results?"

"To many important ones," the old man declared;

but Philippus interrupted him with a loud: "Oho!" adding that his friend was in too great a hurry to deduce laws from individual cases. Many of his observations were, no doubt, of considerable interest. . .

Here Rufinus broke in with some vehemence, and the discussion would have become a dispute if Paula had not intervened by requesting her zealous host to give her the results, at any rate, of his studies.

"I find," said Rufinus very confidently, as he stroked down his long beard, "that they are not merely shrewd because their faculties are early sharpened to make up by mental qualifications for what they lack in physical advantages; they are also witty, like *Æsop* the fabulist and *Besa* the Egyptian god, who, as I have been told by our old friend *Horus*, from whom we derive all our Egyptian lore, presided among those heathen over festivity, jesting, and wit, and also over the toilet of women. This shows the subtle observation of the ancients; for the hunchback whose body is bent, applies a crooked standard to things in general. His keen insight often enables him to measure life as the majority of men do, that is by a straight rule; but in some happy moments when he yields to natural impulse he makes the straight crooked and the crooked straight; and this gives rise to wit, which only consists in looking at things obliquely and setting them askew as it were. You have only to talk to my hump-backed gardener *Gibbus*, or listen to what he says. When he is sitting with the rest of our people in an evening, they all laugh as soon as he opens his mouth. — And why? Because his conformation makes him utter nothing but paradoxes. — You know what they are?"

"Certainly."

"And you, Pul?"

"No, Father."

"You are too straight—nay, and so is your simple soul, to know what the thing is! Well, listen then: It would be a paradox, for instance, if I were to say to the Bishop as he marches past in procession: 'You are godless out of sheer piety;' or if I were to say to Paula, by way of excuse for all the flattery which I and your mother offered her just now: 'Our incense was nauseous for very sweetness.'—These paradoxes, when examined, are truths in a crooked form, and so they best suit the deformed. Do you understand?"

"Certainly," said Paula.

"And you, Pul?"

"I am not quite sure. I should be better pleased to be simply told: "We ought not to have made such flattering speeches; they may vex a young girl."

"Very good, my straightforward child," laughed her father. "But look, there is the man! Here, good Gibbus—come here!—Now, just consider: supposing you had flattered some one so grossly that you had offended him instead of pleasing him: How would you explain the state of affairs in telling me of it?"

The gardener, a short, square man, with a huge hump but a clever face and good features, reflected a minute and then replied: "I wanted to make an ass smell at some roses and I put thistles under his nose."

"Capital!" cried Paula; and as Gibbus turned away, laughing to himself, the physician said:

"One might almost envy the man his hump. But yet, fair Paula, I think we have some straight-limbed folks who can make use of such crooked phrases, too, when occasion serves."

But Rufinus spoke before Paula could reply, referring her to his Essay on the deformed in soul and body; and then he went on vehemently:

"I call you all to witness, does not Baste, the lame woman, restrict her views to the lower aspect of things, to the surface of the earth indeed? She has one leg much shorter than the other, and it is only with much pains that we have contrived that it should carry her. To limp along at all she is forced always to look down at the ground, and what is the consequence? She can never tell you what is hanging to a tree, and about three weeks since I asked her under a clear sky, and a waning moon — whether the moon had been shining the evening before and she could not tell me, though she had been sitting out of doors with the others till quite late, evening after evening. I have noticed, too, that she scarcely recognizes men who are rather tall, though she may have seen them three or four times. Her standard has fallen short — like her leg. Now, am I right or wrong?"

"In this instance you are right," replied Philippus, "still, I know some lame people. . ."

And again words ran high between the friends; Pulcheria, however, put an end to the discussion this time, by exclaiming enthusiastically:

"Baste is the best and most good-natured soul in the whole house!"

"Because she looks into her own heart," replied Rufinus. "She knows herself; and, because she knows how painful pain is, she treats others tenderly. Do you remember, Philippus, how we disputed after that anatomical lecture we heard together at Caesarea?"

"Perfectly well," said the leech, "and later life has

but confirmed the opinion I then held. There is no less true or less just saying than the Latin motto: '*Mens sana in corpore sano*,' as it is generally interpreted to mean that a healthy soul is only to be found in a healthy body. As the expression of a wish it may pass, but I have often felt inclined to doubt even that. It has been my lot to meet with a strength of mind, a hopefulness, and a thankfulness for the smallest mercies in the sickliest bodies, and at the same time a delicacy of feeling, a wise reserve, and an undeviating devotion to lofty things such as I have never seen in a healthy frame. The body is but the tenement of the soul, and just as we find righteous men and sinners, wise men and fools, alike in the palace and the hovel—nay, and often see truer worth in a cottage than in the splendid mansions of the great—so we may discover noble souls both in the ugly and the fair, in the healthy and the infirm, and most frequently, perhaps, in the least vigorous. We should be careful how we go about repeating such false axioms, for they can only do harm to those who have a heavy burthen to bear through life as it is. In my opinion a hunchback's thoughts are as straightforward as an athlete's; or do you imagine that if a mother were to place her new-born children in a spiral chamber and let them grow up in it, they could not tend upwards as all men do by nature?"

"Your comparison limps," cried Rufinus, "and needs setting to rights. If we are not to find ourselves in open antagonism. . . ."

"You must keep the peace," Joanna put in addressing her husband; and before Rufinus could retort, Paula had asked him with frank simplicity:

"How old are you, my worthy host?"

"Your arrival at my house blessed the second day of my seventieth year," replied Rufinus with a courteous bow. His wife shook her finger at him, exclaiming :

"I wonder whether you have not a secret hump? Such fine phrases. . . ."

"He is catching the style from his cripples," said Paula laughing at him. "But now it is your turn, friend Philippus. Your exposition was worthy of an antique sage, and it struck me — for the sake of Rufinus here I will not say convinced me. I respect you — and yet I should like to know how old. . . ."

"I shall soon be thirty-one," said Philippus, anticipating her question.

"That is an honest answer," observed Dame Joanna. "At your age many a man clings to his twenties."

"Why?" asked Pulcheria.

"Well," said her mother, "only because there are some girls who think a man of thirty too old to be attractive."

"Stupid creatures," answered Pulcheria. "Let them find me a young man who is more lovable than my father; and if Philippus — yes you, Philippus — were ten or twenty years over nine and twenty, would that make you less clever or kind?"

"Not less ugly, at any rate," said the physician.

Pulcheria laughed, but with some annoyance, as though she had herself been the object of the remark. "You are not a bit ugly!" she exclaimed. "Any one who says so has no eyes. And you will hear nothing said of you but that you are a tall, fine man!"

As the warm-hearted girl thus spoke, defending her

friend against himself, Paula stroked her golden hair and added to the physician :

"Pulcheria's father is so far right that she, at any rate, measures men by a true and straight standard. Note that, Philippus! — But do not take my questioning ill. — I cannot help wondering how a man of one and thirty and one of seventy should have been studying in the high schools at the same time? The moon will not be eclipsed for a long time yet — how bright and clear it is! — So you, Rufinus, who have wandered so far through the wide world, if you would do me a great pleasure, will tell us something of your past life and how you came to settle in Memphis."

"His history?" cried Joanna. "If he were to tell it, in all its details from beginning to end, the night would wane and breakfast would get cold. He has had as many adventures as travelled Odysseus. But tell us something husband; you know there is nothing we should like better."

"I must be off to my duties," said the leech, and when he had taken a friendly leave of the others and bidden farewell to Paula with less effusiveness than of late, Rufinus began his story.

"I was born in Alexandria, where, at that time, commerce and industry still flourished. My father was an armorer; above two hundred slaves and free laborers were employed in his work-shops. He required the finest metal, and commonly procured it by way of Massilia from Britain. On one occasion he himself went to that remote island in a friend's ship, and he there met my mother. Her ruddy gold hair, which Pul has inherited, seems to have bewitched him and, as the handsome foreigner pleased her well — for men like

my father are hard to match nowadays — she turned Christian for his sake and came home with him. They neither of them ever regretted it; for though she was a quiet woman, and to her dying day spoke Greek like a foreigner, the old man often said she was his best counsellor. At the same time she was so soft-hearted, that she could not bear that any living creature should suffer, and though she looked keenly after everything at the hearth and loom, she could never see a fowl, a goose, or a pig slaughtered. And I have inherited her weakness — shall I say ‘alas!’ or ‘thank God?’

“I had two elder brothers who both had to help my father, and who were to carry on the business. When I was ten years old my calling was decided on. My mother would have liked to make a priest of me and at that time I should have consented joyfully; but my father would not agree, and as we had an uncle who was making a great deal of money as a *Rhetor*, my father accepted a proposal from him that I should devote myself to that career. So I went from one teacher to another and made good progress in the schools.

“Till my twentieth year I continued to live with my parents, and during my many hours of leisure I was free to do or leave undone whatever I had a fancy for; and this was always something medical, if that is not too big a word. I was but a lad of twelve when this fancy first took me, and that through pure accident. Of course I was fond of wandering about the workshops, and there they kept a magpie, a quaint little bird, which my mother had fed out of compassion. It could say ‘Blockhead,’ and call my name and a few other words, and it seemed to like the noise, for it always would fly off to where the smiths were hammering

and filing their loudest, and whenever it perched close to one of the anvils there were sure to be mirthful faces over the shaping and scraping and polishing. For many years its sociable ways made it a favorite; but one day it got caught in a vice and its left leg was broken. Poor little creature!"

The old man stooped to wipe his eyes unseen, but he went on without pausing:

"It fell on its back and looked at me so pathetically that I snatched the tongs out of the bellows-man's hand—for he was going to put an end to its sufferings in all kindness—and, picking it up gently, I made up my mind I would cure it. Then I carried the bird into my own room, and to keep it quiet that it might not hurt itself, I tied it down to a frame that I contrived, straightened its little leg, warmed the injured bone by sucking it, and strapped it to little wooden splints. And behold it really set: the bird got quite well and fluttered about the workshops again as sound as before, and whenever it saw me it would perch upon my shoulder and peck very gently at my hair with its sharp beak.

"From that moment I could have found it in me to break the legs of every hen in the yard, that I might set them again; but I thought of something better. I went to the barbers and told them that if any one had a bird, a dog, or a cat, with a broken limb, he might bring it to me, and that I was prepared to cure all these injuries gratis; they might tell all their customers. The very next day I had a patient brought me: a black hound, with tan spots over his eyes, whose leg had been smashed by a badly-aimed spear: I can see him now! Others followed; feathered or four-footed

sufferers; and this was the beginning of my surgical career. The invalid birds on the trees I still owe to my old allies the barbers. I only occasionally take beasts in hand. The lame children, whom you saw in the garden, come to me from poor parents who cannot afford a surgeon's aid. The merry, curly-headed boy who brought you a rose just now is to go home again in a few days.—But to return to the story of my youth.

“The more serious events which gave my life this particular bias occurred in my twentieth year, when I had already left even the high school behind me; nor was I fully carried away by their influence till after my uncle had procured me several opportunities of proving my proficiency in my calling. I may say without vanity that my speeches won approval; but I was revolted by the pompous, flowery bombast, without which I should have been hissed down, and though my parents rejoiced when I went home from Niku, Arsinoe, or some other little provincial town, with laurel-wreaths and gold pieces, to myself I always seemed an impostor. Still, for my father's sake, I dared not give up my profession, although I hated more and more the task of praising people to the skies whom I neither loved nor respected, and of shedding tears of pathos while all the time I was minded to laugh.

“I had plenty of time to myself, and as I did not lack courage and held stoutly to our Greek confession, I was always to be found where there was any stir or contention between the various sects. They generally passed off with nothing worse than bruises and scratches, but now and then swords were drawn. On one occasion thousands came forth to meet thousands, and the Prefect called out the troops—all Greeks—

to restore order by force. A massacre ensued in which thousands were killed. I could not describe it! Such scenes were not rare, and the fury and greed of the mob were often directed against the Jews by the machinations of the creatures of the archbishop and the government. The things I saw there were so horrible, so shocking, that the tongue refuses to tell them; but one poor Jewess, whose husband the wretches—our fellow Christians—killed, and then pillaged the house, I have never forgotten!—A soldier dragged her down by her hair, while a ruffian snatched the child from her breast and, holding it by its feet, dashed its skull against the wall before her eyes—as you might slash a wet cloth against a pillar to dry it—I shall never forget that handsome young mother and her child; they come before me in my dreams at night even now.

“All these things I saw; and I shuddered to behold God’s creatures, beings endowed with reason, persecuting their fellows, plunging them into misery, tearing them limb from limb—and why? Merciful Saviour, why? For sheer hatred—as sure as man is the standard for all things—merely carried away by a hideous impulse to spite their neighbor for not thinking as they do—nay, simply for not being themselves—to hurt him, insult him, work him woe. And these fanatics, these armies who raised the standard of ruthlessness, of extermination, of blood-thirstiness, were Christians, were baptized in the name of Him who bids us forgive our enemies, who enlarged the borders of love from the home and the city and the state to include all mankind; who raised the adulteress from the dust, who took children into his arms, and

would have more joy over a sinner who repents than over ninety and nine just persons! — Blood, blood, was what they craved; and did not the doctrine of Him whose followers they boastfully called themselves grow out of the blood of Him who shed it for all men alike, — just as that lotos flower grows out of the clear water in the marble tank? And it was the highest guardians and keepers of this teaching of mercy, who goaded on the fury of the mob: Patriarchs, bishops, priests and deacons — instead of pointing to the picture of the Shepherd who tenderly carries the lost sheep and brings it home to the fold.

“My own times seemed to me the worst that had ever been; aye, and — as surely as man is the standard of all things — so they are! for love is turned to hatred, mercy to implacable hardheartedness. The thrones not only of the temporal but of the spiritual rulers, are dripping with the blood of their fellow-men. Emperors and bishops set the example; subjects and churchmen follow it. The great, the leading men of the struggle are copied by the small, by the peaceful candidates for spiritual benefices. All that I saw as a man, in the open streets, I had already seen as a boy both in the low and high schools. Every doctrine has its adherents; the man who casts in his lot with Cneius is hated by Caius, who forthwith speaks and writes to no other end than to vex and put down Cneius, and give him pain. Each for his part strives his utmost to find out faults in his neighbor and to put him in the pillory, particularly if his antagonist is held the greater man, or is likely to overtop him. Listen to the girls at the well, to the women at the spindle; no one is sure of applause who cannot tell some evil of the other men

or women. Who cares to listen to his neighbor's praises? The man who hears that his brother is happy at once envies him! Hatred, hatred everywhere! Everywhere the will, the desire, the passion for bringing grief and ruin on others rather than to help them, raise them and heal them!

"That is the spirit of my time; and everything within me revolted against it with sacred wrath. I vowed in my heart that I would live and act differently; that my sole aim should be to succor the unfortunate, to help the wretched, to open my arms to those who had fallen into unmerited contumely, to set the crooked straight for my neighbor, to mend what was broken, to pour in balm, to heal and to save!

"And, thank God! it has been vouchsafed to me in some degree to keep this vow; and though, later, some whims and a passionate curiosity got mixed up with my zeal, still, never have I lost sight of the great task of which I have spoken, since my father's death and since my uncle also left me his large fortune. Then I had done with the Rhetor's art, and travelled east and west to seek the land where love unites men's hearts and where hatred is only a disease; but as sure as man is the standard of all things, to this day all my endeavors to find it have been in vain. Meanwhile I have kept my own house on such a footing that it has become a stronghold of love; in its atmosphere hatred cannot grow, but is nipped in the germ.

"In spite of this I am no saint. I have committed many a folly, many an injustice; and much of my goods and gold, which I should perhaps have done better to save for my family, has slipped through my fingers, though in the execution, no doubt, of what I deemed

the highest duties. Would you believe it, Paula? — Forgive an old man for such fatherly familiarity with the daughter of Thomas; — hardly five years after my marriage with this good wife, not long after we had lost our only son, I left her and our little daughter, Pul there, for more than two years, to follow the Emperor Heraclius of my own free will to the war against the Persians who had done me no harm — not, indeed, as a soldier, but as a surgeon eager for experience. To confess the truth I was quite as eager to see and treat fractures and wounds and injuries in great numbers, as I was to exercise benevolence. I came home with a broken hip-bone, tolerably patched up, and again, a few years later, I could not keep still in one place. The bird of passage must need drag wife and child from the peace of hearth and homestead, and take them to where he could go to the high school. A husband, a father, and already grey-headed, I was a singular exception among the youths who sat listening to the lectures and explanations of their teachers; but as sure as man is the standard of all things, they none of them outdid me in diligence and zeal, though many a one was greatly my superior in gifts and intellect, and among them the foremost was our friend Philippus. Thus it came about, noble Paula, that the old man and the youth in his prime were fellow-students; but to this day the senior gladly bows down to his young brother in learning and feeling. To straighten, to comfort, and to heal: this is the aim of his life too. And even I, an old man, who started long before Philippus on the same career, often long to call myself his disciple."

Here Rufinus paused and rose; Paula, too, got up, grasped his hand warmly, and said :

"If I were a man, I would join you! But Philippus has told me that even a woman may be allowed to work with the same purpose. — And now let me beg of you never to call me anything but Paula—you will not refuse me this favor. I never thought I could be so happy again as I am with you; here my heart is free and whole. Dame Joanna, do you be my mother! I have lost the best of fathers, and till I find him again, you, Rufinus, must fill his place!"

"Gladly, gladly!" cried the old man; he clasped both her hands and went on vivaciously: "And in return I ask you to be an elder sister to Pul. Make that timid little thing such a maiden as you are yourself.— But look, children, look up quickly; it is beginning!—Typhon, in the form of a boar, is swallowing the eye of Horus: so the heathen of old in this country used to believe when the moon suffered an eclipse. See how the shadow is covering the bright disk. When the ancients saw this happening they used to make a noise, shaking the sistrum with its metal rings, drumming and trumpeting, shouting and yelling, to scare off the evil one and drive him away. It may be about four hundred years since that last took place, but to this day—draw your kerchiefs more closely round your heads and come with me to the river—to this day Christians degrade themselves by similar rites. Wherever I have been in Christian lands, I have always witnessed the same scenes: our holy faith has, to be sure, demolished the religions of the heathen; but their superstitions have survived, and have forced their way through rifts and chinks into our ceremonial. They are marching round now, with the bishop at their head, and you can hear the loud wailing

of the women, and the cries of the men, drowning the chant of the priests. Only listen! They are as passionate and agonized in their entreaty as though old Typhon were even now about to swallow the moon, and the greatest catastrophe was hanging over the world. Aye, as surely as man is the standard of all things, those terrified beings are diseased in mind; and how are we to forgive those who dare to scare Christians; yes, Christian souls, with the traditions of heathen folly, and to blind their inward vision?"

CHAPTER XXII.

UP to within a few days Katharina had still been a dependent and docile child, who had made it a point of honor to obey instantly, not only her mother's lightest word, but Dame Neforis, too; and, since her own Greek instructress had been dismissed, even the acid Eudoxia. She had never concealed from her mother, or the worthy teacher whom she had truly loved, the smallest breach of rules, the least naughtiness or wilful act of which she had been guilty; nay, she had never been able to rest till she had poured out a confession, before evening prayer, of all that her little heart told her was not perfectly right, to some one whom she loved, and obtained full forgiveness. Night after night the "Water-wagtail" had gone to sleep with a conscience as clear and as white as the breast of her whitest dove, and the worst sin she had ever committed during the day was some forbidden scramble, some dainty or, more frequently, some rude and angry word.

But a change had first come over her after Orion's kiss in the intoxicating perfume of the flowering trees; and almost every hour since had roused her to new hopes and new views. It had never before occurred to her to criticise or judge her mother; now she was constantly doing so. The way in which Susannah had cut herself off from her neighbors in the governor's house, to her daughter seemed perverse and in bad taste; and the bitterly vindictive attacks on her old friends, which were constantly on Susannah's lips, aggrieved the girl, and finally set her in opposition to her mother, whose judgment had hitherto seemed to her infallible. Thus, when the governor's house was closed against her, there was no one in whom she cared to confide, for a barrier stood between her and Paula, and she was painfully conscious of its height each time the wish to pass it recurred to her mind. Paula was certainly "that other" of whom Orion had spoken; when she had stolen away to see her in the evening after the funeral, she had been prompted less by a burning wish to pour out her heart to a sympathizing hearer, than by torturing curiosity mingled with jealousy. She had crept through the hedge with a strangely-mixed feeling of tender longing and sullen hatred; when they had met in the garden she had at first given herself up to the full delight of being free to speak, and of finding a listener in a woman so much her superior; but Paula's reserved replies to her bold questioning had revived her feelings of envy and grudge. Any one who did not hate Orion must, she was convinced, love him.

Were they not perhaps already pledged to each other! Very likely Paula had thought of her as

merely a credulous child, and so had concealed the fact!

This "very likely" was torture to her, and she was determined to try, at any rate, to settle the doubt. She had an ally at her command; this was her foster-brother, the son of her deaf old nurse; she knew that he would blindly obey all her wishes—nay, to please her, would throw himself to the crocodiles in the Nile. Anubis had been her comrade in all her childish sports, till at the age of fourteen, after learning to read and write, her mother had obtained an appointment for him in the governor's household, as an assistant to be further trained by the treasurer Nilus. Dame Susannah intended to find him employment at a future date on her estates, or at Memphis, the centre of their administration, as he might prove himself capable. The lad was still living with his mother under the rich widow's roof, and only spent his working days at the governor's house, he was industrious and clever during office hours, though between whiles he busied himself with things altogether foreign to his future calling. At Katharina's request he had opened a communication between the two houses by means of carrier-pigeons, and many missives were thus despatched with little gossip, invitations, excuses, and the like, from Katharina to Mary and back again. Anubis took great pleasure in the pretty creatures, and by the permission of his superiors a dovecote was erected on the roof of the treasurer's house. Mary was now lying ill, and their intercourse was at an end; still, the well-trained messengers need not be idle, and Katharina had begun to use them for a very different purpose.

Orion's envoy had been detained a long time at

Rufinus' door the day before ; and she had since learnt from Anubis, who was acquainted with all that took place in Nilus' office, that Paula's moneys were to be delivered over to her very shortly, and in all probability by Orion himself. They must then have an interview, and perhaps she might succeed in overhearing it. She knew well how this could be managed ; the only thing was to be on the spot at the right moment.

On the morning after the full-moon, at two hours and a half before noon, the little boy whose task it was to feed the feathered messengers in their dove-cote brought her a written scrap, on which Anubis informed her that Orion was about to set out ; but he was not very warmly welcomed, for the hour did not suit her at all. Early in the morning Bishop Plotinus had come to inform Susannah that Benjamin, Patriarch of Alexandria, was visiting Amrû on the opposite shore, and would presently honor Memphis with his presence. He proposed to remain one day ; he had begged to have no formal reception, and had left it to the bishop to find suitable quarters for himself and his escort, as he did not wish to put up at the governor's house. The vain widow had at once pressingly urged her readiness to receive the illustrious guest under her roof : The prelate's presence must bring a blessing on the house, and she thought, too, that she might turn it to advantage for several ends she just now happened to have in view.

A handsome reception must be prepared ; there were but a few hours to spare, and even before the bishop had left her, she had begun to call the servants together and give them orders. The whole house must be turned upside down ; some of the kitchen staff were

hurried off into the town to make purchases, others bustled round the fire; the gardeners plundered the beds and bushes to weave wreaths and nosegays for decorations; from cellar to roof half a hundred of slaves, white, brown and black, were toiling with all their might, for each believed that, by rendering a service to the Patriarch, he might count on the special favor of Heaven, while their unresting mistress never ceased screaming out her orders as to what she wished done.

Susannah, who as a girl had been the eldest of a numerous and not wealthy family, and had been obliged to put her own hand to things, quite forgot now that she was a woman of position and fortune whom it ill-beseemed to do her own household work; she was here, there, and everywhere, and had an eye on all — excepting indeed her own daughter; but she was the petted darling of the house, brought up to Greek refinement, whose help in such arduous labors was not to be thought of; indeed, she would only have been in the way.

When the bishop had taken his leave Katharina was merely desired to be ready in her best attire, with a nosegay in her hand, to receive the Patriarch under the awning spread outside the entrance. More than this the widow did not require of her, and as the girl flew up the stairs to her room she was thinking: "Orion will be coming directly: it still wants fully two hours of noon, and if he stays there half an hour that will be more than enough. I shall have time then to change my dress, but I will put my new sandals on at once as a precaution; nurse and the maid must wait for me in my room. They must have everything ready for my return — per-

haps he and Paula may have much to say to each other. He will not get off without a lecture, unless she has already found an opportunity elsewhere of expressing her indignation."

A few minutes later she had sprung to the top of a mound of earth covered with turf, which she had some time since ordered to be thrown up close behind the hedge through which she had yesterday made her way. Her little feet were shod with handsome gold sandals set with sapphires, and she seated herself on a low bench with a satisfied smile, as though to assist at a theatrical performance. Some broad-leaved shrubs, placed behind this place of ambush, screened her to some extent from the heat of the sun, and as she sat watching and listening in this lurking place, which she was not using for the first time, her heart began to beat more quickly; indeed, in her excitement she quite forgot some sweetmeats which she had brought to wile away the time and had poured into a large leaf in her lap.

Happily she had not long to wait; Orion arrived in his mother's four-wheeled covered chariot. By the side of the driver sat a servant, and a slave was perched on the step to the door on each side of the vehicle. It was followed by a few idlers, men and women, and a crowd of half-naked children. But they got nothing by their curiosity, for the *carruca* did not draw up in the road, but was driven into Rufinus' garden, and the trees and shrubs hid it from the gaze of the expectant mob, which presently dispersed.

Orion got out at the principal door of the house, followed by the treasurer; and while the old man welcomed the son of the Mukaukas, Nilus superintended

the transfer of a considerable number of heavy sacks to their host's private room.

Nothing of all this had seemed noteworthy to Katharina but the quantity and size of the bags — full, no doubt, of gold — and the man, whom alone she cared to see. Never had she thought Orion so handsome; the long, flowing mourning robe, which he had flung over his shoulder in rich folds, added to the height of his stately form; his abundant hair, not curled but waving naturally, set off his face which, pale and grave as it was, both touched and attracted her irresistibly. The thought that this splendid creature had once courted her, loved her, kissed her — that he had once been hers, and that she had lost him to another, was a pang like physical agony, mounting from her heart to her brain.

After Orion had vanished indoors, she still seemed to see him; and when she thrust his image from her fancy, forced to remind herself that he was now standing face to face with that other, and was looking at Paula as, a few days since, he had looked at her, the anguish of her soul was doubled. And was Paula only half as happy as she had been in that hour of supreme bliss? Ah! how her heart ached! She longed to leap over the hedge — she could have rushed into the house and flung herself between Paula and Orion.

Still, there she sat; restless but without moving; wholly under the dominion of evil thoughts, among which a good one rarely and timidly intruded, with her eyes fixed on Rufinus' dwelling. It stood in the broad sunshine as silent as death, as if all were sleeping. In the garden, too, all was motionless but the thin jet of water, which danced up from the marble tank with a

soft and fitful, but monotonous tinkle, while butterflies, dragonflies, bees, and beetles, whose hum she could not hear, seemed to circle round the flowers without a sound. The birds must be asleep, for not one was to be seen or broke the oppressive stillness by a chirp or a twitter. The chariot at the door might have been spellbound; the driver had dismounted, and he, with the other slaves, had stretched himself in the narrow strips of shade cast by the pillars of the verandah; their chins buried in their breasts, they spoke not a word. The horses alone were stirring — flicking off the flies with their flowing tails, or turning to bite the burning stings they inflicted. This now and then lifted the pole, and as the chariot crunched backwards a few inches, the charioteer growled out a sleepy “Brrr.”

Katharina had laid a large leaf on her head for protection against the sun; she did not dare use a parasol or a hat for fear of being seen. The shade cast by the shrubs was but scanty, the noontide heat was torment; still, though minute followed minute and one-quarter of an hour after another crept by at a snail's pace, she was far too much excited to be sleepy. She needed no dial to tell her the time; she knew exactly how late it was as one shadow stole to this point and another to that, and, by risking the danger to her eyes of glancing up at the sun, she could make doubly sure.

It was now within three-quarters of an hour of noon, and in that house all was as still as before; the Patriarch, however, might be expected to be punctual, and she had done nothing towards dressing but putting on those gilt sandals. This brought her to swift decision; she hurried to her room, desired the maid not to dress her hair, contenting herself with pinning a few roses

into its natural curls. Then, in fierce haste, she made her throw on her sea-green dress of bombyx silk edged with fine embroidery, and fasten her peplos with the first pins that came to hand; and when the snap of her bracelet of costly sapphires broke, as she herself was fastening it, she flung it back among her other trinkets as she might have tossed an unripe apple back upon a heap. She slipped her little hand into a gold spiral which curled round half her arm, and gathered up the rest of her jewels, to put them on out of doors as she sat watching. The waiting-woman was ordered to come for her at noon with the flowers for the Patriarch, and, in a quarter of an hour after leaving her lurking-place, she was back there again. Just in time; — for while she was putting on the trinkets Nilus came out, followed by some slaves with several leather bags which they replaced in the chariot. Then the treasurer stepped in and with him Philippus, and the vehicle drove away.

“So Paula has entrusted her property to Orion again,” thought Katharina. “They are one again; and henceforth there will be endless going and coming between the governor’s house and that of Rufinus. A very pretty game! — But wait, only wait.” And she set her little white teeth; but she retained enough self-possession to mark all that took place.

During her absence indoors Orion’s black horse had been brought into the garden; a groom on horseback was leading him, and as she watched their movements she muttered to herself with a smile of scorn: “At any rate he is not going to carry her home with him at once.”

A few minutes passed in silence, and at last Paula

came out, and close behind her, almost by her side, walked Orion.

His cheeks were no longer pale, far from it, no more than Katharina's were; they were crimson! How bright his eyes were, how radiant with satisfaction and gladness! — She only wished she were a viper to sting them both in the heel! — At the same time Paula had lost none of her proud and noble dignity — and he? He gazed at his companion like a rapt soul; she fancied she could see the folds of his mourning cloak rising and falling with the beating of his heart. Paula, too, was in mourning. Of course. They were one; his sorrow must be hers, although she had fled from his father's house as though it were a prison. And of course this virtuous beauty knew full well that nothing became her better than dark colors!

In manner, gait and height this pair looked like two superior beings, destined for each other by Fate; Katharina herself could not but confess it.

Some spiteful demon — a friendly one, she thought — led them past her, so close that her sharp ears could catch every word they said as they slowly walked on, or now and then stood still, dogged by the agile water-wagtail, who stole along parallel with them on the other side of the hedge.

"I have so much to thank you for," were the first words she caught from Orion, "that I am shy of asking you yet another favor; but this one indeed concerns yourself. You know how deep a blow was struck me by little Mary's childish hand; still, the impulse that prompted her had its rise in her honest, upright feeling and her idolizing love of you."

"And you would like me to take charge of her?"

asked Paula. "Such a wish is of course granted beforehand — only. . . ."

"Only?" repeated Orion.

"Only you must send her here; for you know that I will never enter your doors again."

"Alas that it should be so! — But the child has been very ill and can hardly leave the house at present; and — since I must own it — my mother avoids her in a way which distresses the child, who is over-excited as it is, and fills her with new terrors."

"How can Neforis treat her little favorite so?"

"Remember," said Orion, "what my father has been to my poor mother. She is now completely crushed: and, when she sees the little girl, that last scene of her unhappy husband's life is brought back to her, with all that came upon my father and me, beyond a doubt through Mary. She looks on the poor little thing as the bane of the family?"

"Then she must come away," said Paula much touched. "Send her to us. Kind and comforting souls dwell under Rufinus' roof."

"I thank you warmly. I will entreat my mother most urgently. . . ."

"Do so," interrupted Paula. "Have you ever seen Pulcheria, the daughter of my worthy host?"

"Yes. — A singularly lovable creature!"

"She will soon take Mary into her faithful heart."

"And our poor little girl needs a friend, now that Susannah has forbidden her daughter to visit at our house."

The conversation now turned on the two girls, of whom they spoke as sweet children, both much to be pitied; and, when Orion observed that his niece was

old for her tender years, Paula replied with a slight accent of reproach: "But Katharina, too, has ripened much during the last few days; the lively child has become a sober girl; her recent experience is a heavy burden on her light heart."

"But, if I know her at all, it will soon be cast off," replied Orion. "She is a sweet, happy little creature; and, of all the dreadful things I did on that day of horrors, the most dreadful perhaps was the woe I wrought for her. There is no excuse possible, and yet it was solely to gratify my mother's darling wish that I consented to marry Katharina. — However, enough of that. — Henceforth I must march through life with large strides, and she to whom love gives courage to become my wife, must be able to keep pace with me.

Katharina could only just hear these last words. The speakers now turned down the path, sparsely shaded from the midday sun by a few trees, which led to the tank in the centre of the garden, and they went further and further from her.

She heard no more — still, she knew enough and could supply the rest. The object of her ambush was gained: she knew now with perfect certainty who was "the other." And how they had spoken of her! Not as a deserted bride, whose rights had been trodden in the dust, but as a child who is dismissed from the room as soon as it begins to be in the way. But she thought she could see through that couple and knew why they had spoken of her thus. Paula, of course, must prevent any new tie from being formed between herself and Orion; and as for Orion, common prudence required that he should mention her — her, whom he had but lately loaded with tenderness — as a mere child, to

protect himself against the jealousy of that austere "other" one. That he had loved her, at any rate that evening under the trees, she obstinately maintained in her own mind; to that conviction she must cling desperately, or lose her last foothold. Her whole being was a prey to a frightful turmoil of feeling. Her hands shook; her mouth was parched as by the midday heat; she knew that there were withered leaves between her feet and the sandals she wore, that twigs had got caught in her hair; but she could not care and when the pair were screened from her by the denser shrubs she flew back to her raised seat—from which she could again discover them. At this moment she would have given all she held best and dearest, to be the thing it vexed her so much to be called: a water-wag-tail, or some other bird.

It must be very near noon if not already past; she dusted her sandals and tidied her curly hair, picking out the dry leaves and not noticing that at the same time a rose fell out on the ground. Only her hands were busy; her eyes were elsewhere, and suddenly they brightened again, for the couple on which she kept them fixed were coming back, straight towards the hedge, and she would soon be able again to hear what they were saying.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ORION and Paula had had much to talk about, since the young man had arrived. The discussion over the safe keeping of the girl's money had been tedious. Finally, her counsellors had decided to entrust half of

it to Gamaliel the jeweller and his brother, who carried on a large business in Constantinople. He happened to be in Memphis, and they had both declared themselves willing each to take half of the sum in question and use it at interest. They would be equally responsible for its security, so that each should make good the whole of the property in their hands in case of the other stopping payment. Nilus undertook to procure legal sanction and the necessary sixteen witnesses to this transaction.

The other half of her fortune was, by the advice of Philippus, to be placed in the hands of a brother of Haschim's, the Arab merchant, who had a large business as money changer in Fostat, the new town on the further shore, in which the merchant himself was a partner. This investment had the advantage of being perfectly safe, at any rate so long as the Arabs ruled the land.

After all this was settled Nilus departed with that half of the money which Orion was to hand over to the keeping of the Moslem money changer on the following morning.

Paula, though she had taken no part in the men's discussion, had been present throughout, and had expressed her grateful consent. The clearness, gravity, and decision which Orion had displayed had not escaped her notice; and though the treasurer's shrewd remarks, briefly and modestly made, had in every case proved final, it was Orion's reasoning and explanations that had most come home to her, for it seemed to her that he was always prompted by loftier, wider, and more statesmanlike considerations than the others.

When this was over she and Orion were left to-

gether, and neither she nor the young man had been able to escape a few moments of anxious heart-beating.

It was not till the governor's son had summoned up his courage and, sinking on his knees, was imploring her pardon, that she recovered some firmness and reminded him of the letter he had sent her. But her heart drew her to him almost irresistibly, and in order not to yield to its urgent promptings, she hastily enquired what he had meant by the exchange he had written about.

At this he went up to her with downcast eyes, drew a small box out of the breast of his robe, and took out the emerald with the damaged setting. He held them towards her with a beseeching gesture, exclaiming, with all the peculiar sweetness of his deep voice :

"It is your property ! Take it and give me in return your confidence, your forgiveness."

She drew back a little, looking first at him and then at the stone and its setting—surprised, pleased, and deeply moved, with a bright light in her eyes. The young man found it impossible to utter a single word, only holding the jewel and the broken setting closer to her, and yet closer, like some poor man who makes bold to offer the best he has to a wealthy superior, though conscious that it is all too humble a gift to find favor.

And Paula was not long undecided ; she took the proffered gem and feasted her glistening eyes with glad thankfulness on her recovered treasure.

Two days ago she had thought of it as defiled and desecrated ; it had gratified her pride to fancy that she had cast the precious jewel at the feet, as it were, of

Neforis and her son, never to see it again. So hard is it to forego the right of hating those who have basely brought grief into our lives and anguish to our souls! — and yet Paula, who would not have yielded this right at any price a short time since, now waived it of her own free will — nay, thrust it from her like some tormenting incubus which choked her pulses and kept her from breathing freely. In this gem she saw once more a cherished memorial of her lost mother, the honorable gift of a great monarch to her forefathers; and she was happy to possess it once more. But it was not this that gave life to the warm, sunny glow of happiness which thrilled through her, or occasioned its quick and delightful growth; for her eye did not linger on the large and glittering stone, but rested spellbound on the poor gold frame which had once held it, and which had cost her such hours of anguish. This broken and worthless thing, it is true, was powerful to justify her in the opinions of her judges and her enemies; with this in her hand she would easily confute her accusers. Still, it was not that which so greatly consoled her. The physician's remark, that there was no greater joy than the discovery that we have been deceived in thinking ill of another, recurred to her mind; and she had once loved the man who now stood before her open to every good influence, deeply moved in her presence; and her judgment of him had been a hundred, a thousand times too hard. Only a noble soul could confidently expect magnanimity from a foe and he, he had put himself defenceless into the power of her who had been mortally stricken by the most fateful, and perhaps the only disgraceful act of his life. In giving up this gold frame Orion also gave himself up; with

this talisman in her possession she stood before him as irresistible Fate. And now, as she looked up at him and met his large eyes, full of life and intellect but sparkling through tears of violent agitation, she felt absolutely certain that this favorite of Fortune, though he had indeed sinned deeply and disastrously, was capable of the highest and greatest aims if he had a friend to show him what life required of him and were but ready to follow such guidance. And such a friend she would be to him !

She, like Orion, could not for some time speak ; but he, at last, was unable to contain himself ; he hastened towards her and pressed her hand to his lips with fervent gratitude, while she — she had to submit ; nay, she would have been incapable of resisting him if, as in her dream, he had clasped her in his arms, to his heart. His burning lips had rested fervently on her hand, but it was only for an instant that she abandoned herself to the violent agitation that mastered her. Then with a great effort her instinct and determination to do right enabled her to control it ; she pushed him from her decisively but not ungently, and then, with some emotion and an arch sweetness which he had never before seen in her, and which charmed him even more than her noble and lofty pride, she said, threatening him with her finger.

“ Take care, Orion ! Now I have the stone and the setting ; yes, that very setting. Beware of the consequences, rash man ! ”

“ Not at all. Say rather : Fool, who at last has succeeded in doing something rational,” he replied joyfully. “ What I have brought you is not a gift ; it is your own. To you it can be neither more nor less than it

was before ; but to me it has gained inestimably in value since it places my honor, perhaps my life even, in your keeping ; I am in your power as completely as the humblest slave in the palace is in that of the Emperor. Keep the gem, and use it and this fateful gold trifle till the day shall come when my weal and woe are one with yours."

"For your dead father's sake," she answered, coloring deeply, "your weal lies already very near my heart. Am not I, who brought upon you your father's curse, bound indeed to help you to free yourself from the burden of it ? And it may perhaps lie in my power to do so, Orion, if you do not scorn to listen to the counsels of an ignorant girl ?"

"Speak," he cried ; but she did not reply immediately. She only begged him to come into the garden with her ; the close atmosphere of the room had become intolerable to both, and when they got out and Katharina had first caught sight of them their flushed cheeks had not escaped her watchful eye.

In the open air, a scarcely perceptible breath from the river moderated the noontide heat, and then Paula found courage to tell him what Philippus had called his apprehension in life. It was not new to him ; indeed it fully answered to the principles he had laid down for the future. He accepted it gratefully : "Life is a function, a ministry, a duty !" the words were a motto, a precept that should aid him in carrying out his plans.

"And the device," he exclaimed, "will be doubly precious to me as having come from your lips. — But I no longer need its warning. The wisest and most practical axioms of conduct never made any man the

better. Who does not bring a stock of them with him when he quits school for the world at large? Precepts are of no use unless, in the voyage of life, a manly will holds the rudder. I have called on mine, and it will steer me to the goal, for a bright guiding star lights the pilot on his way. You know that star; it is. . . .”

“It is what you call your love,” she interposed, with a deep blush. — “Your love for me, and I will trust it.”

“You will!” he cried passionately. “You allow me to hope. . . .”

“Yes, yes, hope!” she again broke in, “but meanwhile. . . .”

“Meanwhile,” he said, “‘do not press me further,’ ought to end your sentence. Oh! I quite understand you; and until I feel that you have good reason once more to respect the maniac who lost you by his own fault, I, who fought you like your most deadly foe, will not even speak the final word. I will silence my longing, I will try. . . .”

“You will try to show me — nay, you will show me — that in you, my foe and persecutor, I have gained my dearest friend! — And now to quite another matter: We know how we stand towards each other and can count on each other with glad and perfect confidence, thanking the Almighty for having opened out a new life to us. To Him we will this day. . . .”

“Offer praise and thanksgiving,” Orion joyfully put in.

And here began the conversation relating to little Mary which Katharina had overheard.

They had gone out of hearing again when Orion explained to Paula that all arrangements for the little

girl must be postponed till the morrow, as he had business now with Amrû, on the other shore of the Nile. He decisively confuted her fears lest he should allow himself to be perverted by the Moslems to their faith; for though he ardently desired to let the Patriarch feel that he had no mind to submit patiently to the affront to his deceased father, he clung too firmly to his creed, and knew too well what was due to the memory of the dead, and to Paula herself, ever to take this extreme step. He spoke in glowing terms as he described how, for the future, he purposed to devote his best powers to his hapless and oppressed country, whether it were in the service of the Khaliff or in some other way; and she eagerly entered into his schemes, quite carried away by his noble enthusiasm, and acknowledging to herself with silent rapture the superiority of his mind and the soaring loftiness of his soul.

When, presently, they began talking again of the past she asked him quite frankly, but in a low voice and without looking up, what had become of the emerald he had taken from the Persian hanging. He turned pale at this, looked at the ground, and hesitatingly replied that he had sent it to Constantinople—to have it set—set in an ornament—worthy of her whom—whom he. . . .”

But here he broke off, stamped angrily with his foot, and looking straight into the girl's eyes exclaimed:

“A pack of lies, foul and unworthy lies! — I have been truthful by nature all my life; but does it not seem as though that accursed day forced me to some base action every time it is even mentioned? Yes, Paula; the gem is really on its way to Byzantium. But the stolen gift was never meant for you, but for a

fair, gentle creature, in nothing blameworthy, who gave me her heart. To me she was never anything but a pretty plaything; still, there were moments when I believed — poor soul! — I first learnt what love meant through you, how great and how sacred it is! — Now you know all; this, indeed, is the truth!"

They walked on again, and Katharina, who had not been able to gather the whole of this explanation, could plainly hear Paula's reply in warm, glad accents:

"Yes, that is the truth, I feel. And henceforth that horrible day is blotted out, erased from your life and mine; and whatever you tell me in the future I shall believe."

And the listener heard the young man answer in a tremulous voice:

"And you shall never be deceived in me. Now I must leave you; and I go, in spite of my griefs, a happy man, entitled to rejoice anew. O Paula, what do I not owe to you! And when we next meet you will receive me, will you not, as you did that evening on the river after my return?"

"Yes, indeed; and with even more glad confidence," replied Paula, holding out her hand with a lovely graciousness that came from her heart; he pressed it a moment to his lips, and then sprang on to his horse and rode off at a round trot, his slave following him.

"Katharina, child, Katharina!" was shouted from Susannah's house in a woman's high-pitched voice. The water-wagtail started up, hastily smoothing her hair and casting an evil glance at her rival, "the other," the supplanter who had basely betrayed her under the

sycamores; she clenched her little fist as she saw Paula watching Orion's retreating form with beaming eyes.

Paula went back into the house, happy and walking on air, while the other poor, deeply-wounded child burst into violent weeping at the first hasty words from her mother, who was not at all satisfied with the disorder of her dress; and she ended by declaring with defiant audacity that she would not present the flowers to the patriarch, and would remain in her own room, for she was dying of headache. — And so she did.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN the course of the afternoon Orion paid his visit to the Arab governor. He crossed the bridge of boats on his finest horse.

Only two years since, the land where the new town of Fostat was now growing up under the old citadel of Babylon had been fields and gardens; but at Amrî's word it had started into being as by a miracle; house after house already-lined the streets, the docks were full of ships and barges, the market was alive with dealers, and on a spot where, during the siege of the fortress, a sutler's booth had stood, a long colonnade marked out the site of a new mosque.

There was little to be seen here now of native Egyptian life; it looked as though some magician had transported a part of Medina itself to the shores of the Nile. Men and beasts, dwellings and shops, though they had adopted much of what they had found in this ancient land of culture, still bore the stamp of their

origin; and wherever Orion's eye fell on one of his fellow-countrymen, he was a laborer or a scribe in the service of the conquerors who had so quickly made themselves at home.

Before his departure for Constantinople one of his father's palm-groves had occupied the spot where Amrû's residence now stood opposite the half-finished mosque. Where, now, thousands of Moslems, some on foot, some on richly caparisoned steeds, were passing to and fro, turbaned and robed after the manner of their tribe, with such adornment as they had stolen or adopted from intercourse with splendor-loving nations, and where long trains of camels dragged quarried stones to the building, in former times only an occasional ox-cart with creaking wheels was to be seen, an Egyptian riding an ass or a bare-backed nag, and now and then a few insolent Greek soldiers. On all sides he heard the sharper and more emphatic accent of the sons of the desert instead of the language of his forefathers and their Greek conquerors. Without the aid of the servant who rode at his side he could not have made himself understood on the soil of his native land.

He soon reached Amrû's house and was there informed by an Egyptian secretary that his master was gone out hunting and would receive him, not in the town, but at the citadel. There, on a pleasant site on the limestone hills which rose behind the fortress of Babylon and the newly-founded city, stood some fine buildings, originally planned as a residence for the Prefect; and thither Amrû had transported his wives, children, and favorite horses, preferring it, with very good reason, to the palace in the town, where he transacted

business, and where the new mosque intercepted the view of the Nile, while this eminence commanded a wide prospect.

The sun was near setting when Orion reached the spot, but the general had not yet come in from the chase, and the gate-keeper requested that he would wait.

Orion was accustomed to be treated in his own country as the heir of the greatest man in it; the color mounted to his brow and his Egyptian heart revolted at having to bend his pride and swallow his wrath before an Arab. He was one of the subject race, and the thought that one word from his lips would suffice to secure his reception in the ranks of the rulers forced itself suddenly on his mind; but he repressed it with all his might, and silently allowed himself to be conducted to a terrace screened by a vine-covered trellis from the heat of the sun.

He sat down on one of the marble seats by the parapet of this hanging garden and looked westward. He knew the scene well, it was the playground of his childhood and youth; hundreds of times the picture had spread before him, and yet it affected him to-day as it had never done before. Was there on earth—he asked himself—a more fertile and luxuriant land? Had not even the Greek poets sung of the Nile as the most venerable of rivers? Had not great Cæsar himself been so fascinated by the idea of discovering its source that to that end—so he had declared—he would have thought the dominion of the world well lost? On the produce of those wide fields the weal and woe of the mightiest cities of the earth had been dependent for centuries; nay, imperial Rome and sov-

ereign Constantinople had quaked with fears of famine, when a bad harvest here had disappointed the hopes of the husbandman.

And was there anywhere a more industrious nation of laborers, had there ever been, before them, a thrifter or a more skilful race? When he looked back on the fate and deeds of nations, on the remotest horizon where the thread of history was scarcely perceptible, that same gigantic Sphinx was there — the first and earliest monument of human joy in creative art — those Pyramids which still proudly stood in undiminished and inaccessible majesty beyond the Nile, beyond the ruined capital of his forefathers, at the foot of the Libyan range. He was the son of the men who had raised these imperishable works, and in his veins perchance there still might flow a drop of the blood of those Pharaohs who had sought eternal rest in these vast tombs, and whose greater progeny had overrun half the world with their armies, and had exacted tribute and submission. He, who had often felt flattered at being praised for the purity of his Greek — pure not merely for his time: an age of bastard tongues — and for the engaging Hellenism of his person, here and now had an impulse of pride of his Egyptian origin. He drew a deep breath, as he gazed at the sinking sun; it seemed to lend intentional significance to the rich beauty of his home as its magical glory transmuted the fields, the stream, and the palm-groves, the roofs of the city, and even the barren desert-range and the Pyramids to burnishing gold. It was fast going to rest behind the Libyan chain. The bare, colorless limestone sparkled like translucent crystal; the glowing sphere looked as though it were melting into the very heart of the moun-

tains behind which it was vanishing, while its rays, shooting upwards like millions of gold threads, bound his native valley to heaven — the dwelling of the Divine Power who had blessed it above all other lands.

To free this beautiful spot of earth and its children from their oppressors — to restore to them the might and greatness which had once been theirs — to snatch down the crescent from the tents and buildings which lay below him and plant the cross which from his infancy he had held sacred — to lead enthusiastic troops of Egyptians against the Moslems — to quell their arrogance and drive them back to the East like Sesostrius, the hero of history and legend — this was a task worthy of the grandson of Menas, of the son of George the great and just Mukaukas.

Paula would not oppose such an enterprise; his excited imagination pictured her indeed as a second Zenobia by his side, ready for any great achievement, fit to aid him and to rule.

Fully possessed by this dream of the future, he had long ceased to gaze at the glories of the sunset and was sitting with eyes fixed on the ground. Suddenly his soaring visions were interrupted by men's voices coming up from the street just below the terrace. He looked over and perceived at its foot about a score of Egyptian laborers; free men, with no degrading tokens of slavery, making their way along, evidently against their will and yet in sullen obedience, with no thought of resistance or evasion, though only a single Arab held them under control.

The sight fell on his excited mood like rain on a smouldering fire, like hail on sprouting seed. His eye, which a moment ago had sparkled with enthusiasm,

looked down with contempt and disappointment on the miserable creatures of whose race he came. A line of bitter scorn curled his lip, for this troop of voluntary slaves were beneath his anger — all the more so as he more vividly pictured to himself what his people had once been and what they were now. He did not think of all this precisely, but as dusk fell, one scene after another from his own experience rose before his mind's eye — occasions on which the Egyptians had behaved ignominiously, and had proved that they were unworthy of freedom and inured to bow in servitude. Just as one Arab was now able to reduce a host of his fellow-countrymen to subjection, so formerly three Greeks had held them in bondage. He had known numberless instances of almost glad submission on the part of free-born Egyptians — peasants, village magnates, and officials, even on his father's estates and farms. In Alexandria and Memphis the sons of the soil had willingly borne the foreign yoke, allowing themselves to be thrust into the shade and humbled by Greeks, as though they were of a baser species and origin, so long only as their religious tenets and the subtleties of their creed remained untouched. Then he had seen them rise and shed their blood, yet even then only with loud outcries and a promising display of enthusiasm. But their first defeat had been fatal and it had required only a small number of trained soldiers to rout them.

To make any attempt against a bold and powerful invader as the leader of such a race would be madness; there was no choice but to rule his people in the service of the enemy and so exert his best energies to make their lot more endurable. His father's wiser and more experienced judgment had decided that the better

course was to serve his people as mediator between them and the Arabs rather than to attempt futile resistance at the head of Byzantine troops.

"Wretched and degenerate brood!" he muttered wrathfully, and he began to consider whether he should not quit the spot and show the arrogant Arab that one Egyptian, at any rate, still had spirit enough to resent his contempt, or whether he should yet wait for the sake of the good cause, and swallow down his indignation. No! he, the son of the Mukaukas, could not — ought not to brook such treatment. Rather would he lose his life as a rebel, or wander an exile through the world and seek far from home a wider field for deeds of prowess, than put his free neck under the feet of the foe. . .

But his reflections were disturbed by the sound of footsteps, and looking round he saw the gleam of lanterns moving to and fro on the terrace, turned directly on him. These must be Amrû's servants come to conduct him to their master, who, as he supposed, would now do him the honor to receive him — tired out with hunting, no doubt, and stretched on his divan while he imperiously informed his guest, as if he were some freed slave, what his wishes were.

But the steps were not those of a messenger. The great general himself had come to welcome him; the lantern-bearers were not to show the way to Amrû's couch, but to guide Amrû to the "son of his dear departed friend." The haughty Vicar of the Khaliffs was the most cordial host, prompted by hospitality to make his guest's brief stay beneath his roof as pleasant as possible, and giving him the right hand of welcome.

He apologized for his prolonged absence in very in-

telligible Greek, having learnt it in his youth as a caravan-leader to Alexandria; he expressed his regret at having left Orion to wait so long, blamed his servants for not inviting him indoors and for neglecting to offer him refreshment. As they crossed the garden-terrace he laid his hand on the youth's shoulder, explained to him that the lion he had been pursuing, though wounded by one of his arrows, had got away, and added that he hoped to make good his loss by the conquest of a nobler quarry than the beast of prey.

There was nothing for it but that the young man should return courtesy for courtesy; nor did he find it difficult. The Arab's fine pleasant voice, full of sincere cordiality, and the simple distinction and dignity of his manner appealed to Orion, flattered him, gave him confidence, and attracted him to the older man who was, besides, a valiant hero.

In his brightly-lighted room hung with costly Persian tapestry, Amrû invited his guest to share his simple hunter's supper after the Arab fashion; so Orion placed himself on one side of the divan while the Governor and his Vekeel * Obada — a Goliath with a perfectly black moorish face squatted rather than sat on the other, after the manner of his people.

Amrû informed his guest that the black giant knew no Greek, and he only now and then threw in a few words which the general interpreted to Orion when he thought fit; but the negro's remarks were not more pleasing to the young Egyptian than his manner and appearance.

Obada had in his childhood been a slave and had worked his way up to his present high position by his

* Deputy.

own exertions; his whole attention seemed centred in the food before him, which he swallowed noisily and greedily, and yet that he was able to follow the conversation very well, in spite of his ignorance of Greek, his remarks sufficiently proved. Whenever he looked up from the dishes, which were placed in the midst on low tables, to put in a word, he rolled his big eyes so that only the whites remained visible; but when he turned them on Orion, their small, black pupils transfixed him with a keen and, as the young man thought, exceedingly sinister glare.

The presence of this man oppressed him; he had heard of his base origin, which to Orion's lofty ideas rendered him contemptible, of his fierce valor, and remarkable shrewdness; and though he did not understand what Obada said, more than once there was something in the man's tone that brought the blood into his face and made him set his teeth. The more kindly and delightful the effect of the Arab's speech and manner, the more irritating and repulsive was his subordinate; and Orion was conscious that he would have expressed himself more freely, and have replied more candidly to many questions, if he had been alone with Amrû.

At first his host made enquiries as to his residence in Constantinople and asked much about his father; and he seemed to take great interest in all he heard till Obada interrupted Orion, in the midst of a sentence, with an enquiry addressed to his superior. Amrû hastily answered him in Arabic and soon after gave a fresh turn to the conversation.

The Vekeel had asked why Amrû allowed that Egyptian boy to chatter so much before settling the

matter about which he had sent for him, and his master had replied that a man is best entertained when he has most opportunity given him for hearing himself talk; that moreover the young man was well-informed, and that all he had to say was interesting and important.

The Moslems drank nothing; Orion was served with capital wine, but he took very little, and at length Amrû began to speak of his father's funeral, alluding to the Patriarch's hostility, and adding that he had talked with him that morning and had been surprised at the marked antagonism he had confessed towards his deceased fellow-believer, who seemed formerly to have been his friend. Then Orion spoke out; he explained fully what the reasons were that had moved the Patriarch to display such conspicuous and far-reaching animosity towards his father. All that Benjamin cared for was to stand clear in the eyes of Christendom of the reproach of having abandoned a Christian land to conquerors who were what Christians termed "infidels;" and his aim at present was to put his father forward as the man wholly and solely responsible for the supremacy of the Moslems in the land.

"True, true; I understand," Amrû put in, and when the young man went on to tell him that the final breach between the Patriarch and the Mukaukas George had been about the convent of St. Cecilia, whose rights the prelate had tried to abrogate by an illegal interpretation of certain ancient and perfectly clear documents; the Arab exchanged rapid glances with the Vekeel and then broke in:

"And you? Are you disposed to submit patiently to the blow struck at you and at your parent's worthy

memory by this restless old man, who hates you as he did your father before you?"

"Certainly not," replied the youth proudly.

"That is right!" cried the general. "That is what I expected of you; but tell me now, with what weapons you, a Christian, propose to defy this shrewd and powerful man, in whose hands—as I know full well—you have placed the weal and woe, not of your souls alone..."

"I do not know yet," replied Orion, and as he met a glance of scorn from the Vekeel, he looked down.

At this Amrû rose, went closer to him, and said:

"And you will seek them in vain, my young friend; nor, if you found them, could you use them. It is easier to hit a woman, an eel, a soaring bird, than these supple, weak, unarmed, robed creatures, who have love and peace on their tongues and use their physical helplessness as a defence, aiming invisible but poisoned darts at those they hate—at you first and foremost, Son of the Mukaukas; I know it and I advise you: Be on your guard! If indeed manly revenge for this slight on your father's memory is dear to your heart you can easily procure it—but only on one condition."

"Show it me!" cried Orion with flaming eyes.

"Become one of us."

"That is what I came here for. My brain and my arm from this day forth are at the service of the rulers of my country: yourself and our common master the Khaliff."

"*Ya Salaam*—that is well!" cried Amrû, laying his hand on Orion's shoulder. "There is but one God, and yours is ours, too, for there is none other but He!

you will not have to sacrifice much in becoming a Moslem, for we, too, count your lord Jesus as one of the prophets; and even you must confess that the last and greatest of them is Mohammed, the true prophet of God. Every man must acknowledge our lord Mohammed, who does not wilfully shut his eyes to the events which have come about under his government and in his name. Your own father admitted. . .”

“My father?”

“He was forced to admit that we are more zealous, more earnest, more deeply possessed by our faith than you, his own fellow-believers.”

“I know it.”

“And when I told him that I had given orders that the desk for the reader of the Koran in our new mosque should be discarded, because when he stepped up to it he was uplifted above the other worshippers, the weary Mukaukas was quite agitated with satisfaction and uttered a loud cry of approbation. We Moslems — for that was what my commands implied — must all be equal in the presence of God, the Eternal, the Almighty, the All-merciful; their leader in prayer must not be raised above them, even by a head; the teaching of the Prophet points the road to Paradise, to all alike, we need no earthly guide to show us the way. It is our faith, our righteousness, our good deeds that open or close the gates of heaven; not a key in the hand of a priest. When you are one of us, no Benjamin can embitter your happiness on earth, no Patriarch can abrogate your claims and your father's to eternal bliss. You have chosen well, boy! Your hand, my convert to the true faith!”

And he held out his hand to Orion with glad ex-

citement. But the young man did not take it; he drew back a little and said rather uneasily:

"Do not misunderstand me, great Captain. Here is my hand, and I can know no greater honor than that of grasping yours, of wielding my sword under your command, of wearing it out in your service and in that of my lord the Khaliff; but I cannot be untrue to my faith."

"Then be crushed by Benjamin — you and all your people!" cried Amrû, disappointed and angry. He waved his hand with a gesture of disgust and dismissal, and then turned to the Vekeel with a shrug, to answer the man's scornful exclamation.

Orion looked at them in dumb indecision; but he quickly collected himself, and said in a tone of modest but urgent entreaty:

"Nay; hear me and do not reject my petition. It could only be to my advantage to go over to you; and yet I can resist so great a temptation; but for that very reason I shall keep faith with you as I do to my religion."

"Till the priests compel you to break it," interrupted the Arab roughly.

"No, no!" cried Orion. "I know that Benjamin is my foe; but I have lost a beloved parent, and I believe in a meeting beyond the grave."

"So do I," replied the Moslem. "And there is but one Paradise and one Hell, as there is but one God."

"What gives you this conviction?"

"My faith."

"Then forgive me if I cling to mine, and hope to see my father once more in that Heaven. . ."

"The heaven to which, as you fools believe, no

souls but your own are admitted! But supposing that it is open only to the immortal spirit of Moslems and closed against Christians? — What do you know of that Paradise? I know your sacred Scriptures — Is it described in them? But the All-merciful allowed our Prophet to look in, and what he saw he has described as though the Most High himself had guided his reed. The Moslem knows what Heaven has to offer him, — but you? Your Hell, you do know; your priests are more readier to curse than to bless. If one of you deviates by one hair's breadth from their teaching they thrust him out forthwith to the abode of the damned. — Me and mine, the Greek Christians, and — take my word for it boy — first and foremost you and your father!"

"If only I were sure of finding him there!" cried Orion striking his breast. "I really should not fear to follow him. I must meet him, must see him again, were it in Hell itself!"

At these words the Vekeel burst into loud laughter, and when Amrû reproved him sharply the negro retorted and a vehement dialogue ensued.

Obada's contumely had roused Orion's wrath; he was longing, burning to reduce this insolent antagonist to silence. However, he contained himself by a supreme effort of will, till Amrû turned to him once more and said in a reserved tone, but not unkindly:

"This clear-sighted man has mentioned a suspicion which I myself had already felt. A worldly-minded young Christian of your rank is not so ready to give up earthly joys and happiness for the doubtful bliss of your Paradise and when you do so and are prepared to forego all that a man holds most dear: Honor, tem-

poral possessions, a wide field of action, and revenge on your enemies, to meet the spirit of the departed once more after death, there must be some special reason in the background. Try to compose yourself, and believe my assurances that I like you and that you will find in me a zealous protector and a discreet friend if you will but tell me candidly and fully what are the motives of your conduct. I myself really desire that our interview should be fruitful of advantages on both sides. So put your trust in a man so much your senior and your father's friend, and speak."

"On no consideration in the presence of that man!" said Orion in a tremulous voice. "Though he is supposed not to understand Greek, he follows every word I say with malicious watchfulness; he dared to laugh at me, he. . ."

"He is as discreet as he is brave, and my Vekeel," interrupted Amrû reprovingly. "If you join us you will have to obey him; and remember this, young man, I sent for you to impose conditions on you, not to have them dictated to me. I grant you an audience as the ruler of this country, as the Vicar of Omar, your Khaliff and mine."

"Then I entreat you to dismiss me, for in the presence of that man my heart and lips are sealed; I feel that he is my enemy."

"Beware of his becoming so!" cried the governor, while Obada shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

Orion understood this gesture, and although he again succeeded in keeping cool he felt that he could no longer be sure of himself; he bowed low, without paying any heed to the Vekeel, and begged Amrû to excuse him for the present.

Amrû, who had not failed to observe Obada's demeanor and who keenly sympathized with what was going on in the young man's mind, did not detain him; but his manner changed once more; he again became the pressing host and invited his guest, as it was growing late, to pass the night under his roof. Orion politely declined, and when at length he quitted the room — without deigning even to look at the Negro — Amrû accompanied him into the anteroom. There he grasped the young man's hand, and said in a low voice full of sincere and fatherly interest:

"Beware of the Negro; you let him perceive that you saw through him — it was brave but rash. For my part I honestly wish you well."

"I believe it, I know it," replied Orion, on whose perturbed soul the noble Arab's warm, deep accents fell like balm. "And now we are alone I will gladly confide in you. I, my Lord, I — my father — you knew him. In cruel wrath, before he closed his eyes, he withdrew his blessing from his only son."

The memory of the most fearful hour of his life choked his voice for a moment, but he soon went on: "One single act of criminal folly roused his anger; but afterwards, in grief and penitence, I thought over my whole life, and I saw how useless it had been; and now, when I came hither with a heart full of glad expectancy to place all I have to offer of mind and gifts at your disposal, I did so, my Lord, because I long to achieve great and noble and difficult or, if it might be, impossible deeds — to be active, to be doing. . ."

Here he was interrupted by Amrû, who said, laying his sinewy arm across the youth's shoulders:

"And because you long to let the spirit of your

dead father, that righteous man, see that a heedless act of youthful recklessness has not made you unworthy of his blessing; because you hope by valiant deeds to compel his wrath to turn to approval, his scorn to esteem. . . .”

“Yes, yes, that is the thing, the very thing!” Orion broke in with fiery enthusiasm; but the Arab eagerly signed to him to lower his voice, as though to cheat some listener, and whispered hastily, but with warm kindness:

“And I, I will help you in this praiseworthy endeavor. Oh, how much you remind me of the son of my heart who, like you, erred, and who was permitted to atone for all, for more than all by dying like a hero for his faith on the field of battle! — Count on me, and let your purpose become deed. In me you have found a friend. — Now, go. You shall hear from me before long. But, once more: Do not provoke the Negro; beware of him; and the next time you meet him subdue your pride and make as though you had never seen him before.”

He looked sadly at Orion, as though the sight of him revived some loved image in his mind, kissed his brow, and as soon as the youth had left the anteroom he hastily drew open the curtain that hung across the door into the dining-room. — A few steps behind it stood the Vekeel, who was arranging the straps of his sword-belt.

“Listener!” exclaimed the Arab with intense scorn, “you, a man of gifts, a man of deeds! A hero in battle and in council; lion, serpent, and toad in one! When will you cast out of your soul all that is contemptible and base? Be what you have made yourself, not what

you were; do not constantly remind the man who helped you to rise that you were born of a slave!"

"My Lord!" began the Moor, and the whites of his rolling eyes were ominously conspicuous in his black face. But Amrû took the words out of his mouth and went on in stern and determined reproof:

"You behaved to that noble youth like an idiot, like a buffoon at a fair, like a madman."

"To Hell with him!" cried Obada, "I hate the gilded upstart."

"Envious wretch! Do not provoke him! Times change, and the day may come when you will have reason to fear him."

"Him?" shrieked the other. "I could crush the puppet like a fly! And he shall live to know it."

"Your turn first and then his!" said Amrû. "To us he is the more important of the two — yes, he, the upstart, the puppet. Do you hear? Do you understand? If you touch a hair of his head, it will cost you your nose and ears! Never for an hour forget that you live — and ought not to live — only so long as two pairs of lips are sealed. You know whose. That clever head remains on your shoulders only as long as they choose. Cling to it, man; you have only one to lose! It was necessary, my lord Vekeel, to remind you of that once more!"

The Negro groaned like a wounded beast and suddenly panted out: "This is the reward of past services; these are the thanks of Moslem to Moslem! — And all for the sake of a Christian dog."

"You have had thanks, and more than are your due," replied Amrû more calmly. "You know what you pledged yourself to before I raised you to be my

Vekeel for the sake of your brains and your sword, and what I had to overlook before I did so — not on your behalf, but for the great cause of Islam. And, if you wish to remain where you are, you will do well to sacrifice your wild ambition. If you cannot, I will send you back to the army, and to-day rather than to-morrow; and if you carry it with too high a hand you will find yourself at Medina in fetters, with your death-warrant stuck in your girdle.”

The Negro again groaned sullenly; but his master was not to be checked.

“Why should you hate this youth? Why, a child could see through it! In the son and heir of George you see the future Mukaukas, while you are cherishing the insane wish to become the Mukaukas yourself.”

“And why should such a wish be insane?” cried the other in a harsh voice. “Putting you out of the question, who is there here that is shrewder or stronger than I?”

“No Moslem, perhaps. But neither you nor any other true believer will succeed to the dead man’s office, but an Egyptian and a Christian. Prudence requires it, and the Khaliff commands it.”

“And does he also command that this curled ape shall be left in possession of his millions?”

“So that is what you covet, you greedy curmudgeon—that is it? Do not all the crimes you have committed out of avarice weigh upon you heavily enough? Gold, and yet more gold—that is the end, the foul end, of all your desires. A fat morsel, no doubt: the Mukaukas’ estates, his talents of gold, his gems, slaves, and horses; I admit that. But thank God the All-merciful, we are not thieves and robbers!”

“And who was it that dug out the hidden millions from beneath the reservoir of Peter the Egyptian, and who made him bite the dust?”

“I—I. But—as you know—only to send the money to Medina. Peter had hidden it before we killed him. The Mukaukas and his son have declared all their possessions to the uttermost *dinar* and hide of land; they have faithfully paid the taxes, and consequently their property belongs to them as our swords, our horses, our wives belong to you or me. What will not your grasping spirit lead you to!—Take your hand from your dagger!—Not a copper coin from them shall fall into your hungry maw, so help me God! Do not again cast an evil eye on the Mukaukas’ son! Do not try my patience too far, man, or else—Hold your head tight on your shoulders or you will have to seek it at your feet; and what I say I mean!—Now, good-night! To-morrow morning in the divan you are to explain your scheme for the new distribution of the land; it will not suit me in any way, and I shall have other projects to propose for discussion.”

With this the Arab turned his back on the Vekeel; but no sooner had the door closed on him than Obada clenched his fist in fury at his lord and master, who had hitherto said nothing of his having had purloined a portion of the consignment of gold which Amrû had charged him to escort to Medina. Then he rushed up and down the room, snorting and foaming till slaves came in to clear the tables.

CHAPTER XXV.

ORION made his way home under the moonlit and starry night. He held his head high, and not since that evening on the water with Paula had he felt so glad or so hopeful. On the other side of the bridge he did not at once turn his horse's head homewards; the fresh night air was so delightful, his heart beat so high that he shrunk from the oppression of a room. Full of renewed life, freed from a burden as it were, he made his way at a round pace to the house that held his beloved, picturing to himself how gladly she would welcome the news that he had found Amrû ready to encourage him in his projects, indeed, to be a fatherly friend.

The Arab general, whose lofty character, intellect, and rectitude his father had esteemed highly, had impressed him, too, as the ideal of noble manliness, and as he compared him with the highest officials and warriors he had met at the Court of Byzantium he could not help smiling. By the side of this dignified, but impetuous and warm-hearted man they appeared like the old, rigid idols of his ancestors in comparison with the freely-wrought works of Greek art. He could bless the memory of his father for having freed the land from that degenerate race. Now, he felt, that lost parent, whose image lived in his soul, was satisfied with him, and this gave him a sense of happiness which he meant to cling to and enhance by every thought and deed in the future. "Life is a function, a ministry, and a

duty !” this watchword, which had been given him by those beloved lips, should keep him in the new path ; and soon he hoped to feel sure of himself, to be able to look back on such deeds of valor as would give him a right in his own judgment to unite his lot to that of this noblest of women.

Full of such thoughts as these, he made his way to the house of Rufinus. The windows of the corner room on the upper floor were lighted up ; two of these windows looked out on the river and the quay. He did not know which rooms were Paula’s, but he looked up at the late-burning light with a vague feeling that it must be hers ; a female figure which now appeared framed in the opening, showed him that he was not mistaken ; it was that of Perpetua. The sound of hoofs had roused her curiosity, but she did not seem to recognize him in the dim starlight.

He slowly rode past, and when he presently turned back and again looked up, in the hope this time of seeing Paula, the place was vacant : however, he perceived a tall dark shadow moving across from one side of the room to the other, which could not be that of the nurse nor of her slender mistress. It must indeed be that of a remarkably big man, and stopping to gaze with anxious and unpleasant apprehension, he plainly recognized Philippus.

It was past midnight. How could he account for his being with Paula at this hour ? — Was she ill ? — Was this room hers after all ? — Was it merely by chance that the nurse was in Rufinus’ room with the physician.

No. The woman whom he could now see pass across the window and go straight up to the man, with

outstretched hands, was Paula and none other. His heart was already beating fast, and now a suspicion grew strong in him which his vanity had hitherto held in check, though he had often seen the friendly relations that subsisted between Paula and the leech. — Perhaps it was a warmer feeling than friendship and guileless trust, which had led her so unreservedly to claim this man's protection and service. Could he have won Paula's heart — Paula's love ?

Was it conceivable ! — But why not ?

What was there against Philippus but his homely face and humble birth ? And how many a woman had he not seen set her heart on quite other things ! The physician was not more than five years his senior ; and recalling the expression in his eyes as he looked at Paula only that morning Orion felt more and more uneasy.

Philippus loved Paula. — A trifling incident suddenly occurred to his mind which made him certain on that point ; he had only too much experience in such matters. Yesterday, it had struck him that ever since his father's death — that was ever since Paula's change of residence — Philippus dressed more carefully than had been his wont. " Now this," thought he, " is a change that does not come over so serious a man unless it is caused by love."

A mingled torment of pain and rage shot through him as he again saw the tall shadow cross the window. For the first time in his life he felt the pangs of jealousy, which he had so often laughed at in his friends ; but was it not absurd to allow it to torture him ; was he not sure, since that morning's meeting, quite sure of Paula ? And Philippus ! Even if he, Orion, must re-

tire into the background before a higher judge, in the eyes of a woman he surely had the advantage!— But in spite of all this it troubled him to know that the physician was with Paula at such an hour; he angrily pulled his horse's head round, and it was a pleasure to him to feel the fiery creature, unused as it was to such rough treatment, turn restive at it now. By the time he had gone a hundred steps from those windows with their cursed glare, the horse was displaying all the temper and vice that had been taken out of him as a foal. Orion had to fight a pitched battle with his steed, and it was a relief to him to exercise his power with curb and knee. In vain did the creature dance round and round; in vain did he rear and plunge; the steady rider was his master; and it was not till he had brought him to quietness and submission that Orion drew breath and looked about him while he patted the horse's smooth neck.

Close at hand, behind a low hedge, spread the thick, dark groves of Susannah's garden and between them the back of the house was visible, being more brilliantly lighted than even Paula's rooms. Three of the windows showed lights; two were rather dim, however, the result probably of one lamp only.

All this could not matter to him; nevertheless he remained gazing at the roof of the colonnade which went round the house below the upper floor; for, on the terrace it formed, leaning against a window-frame, stood a small figure with her head thrust so far forth to listen that the light shone through the curls that framed it. Katharina was trying to overhear a dialogue between the Patriarch Benjamin — whose bearded and apostolic head Orion could clearly recognize — and the

priest John, an insignificant looking little man, of whom, however, the deceased Mukaukas had testified that he was far superior to old Plotinus the Bishop in intellect and energy.

The young man could easily have watched Katharina's every movement, but he did not think it worth while. Nevertheless, as he rode on, the water-wagtail's little figure dwelt in his mind; not alone, however, for that of Paula immediately rose by her side; and the smaller Katharina's seemed, the more ample and noble did the other appear. Every word he had heard that day from Paula's lips rushed to his remembrance, and the vivid and lovely memory drove out all care. That woman, who only a few hours since, had declared herself ready, with him, to hope all things, to believe all things, and to accept his protection—that lordly maiden whom he had been glad to bid fix her eye, with him, on the goal of his future efforts, whose pure gaze could restrain his passion and impetuosity as by a charm, and who yet granted him the right to strive to possess her—that proud daughter of heroes, whom even his father would have clasped to his heart as a daughter—was it possible that she should betray him like some pleasure-seeking city beauty? Could she forget her dignity as a woman?—No! and a thousand times no. To doubt her was to insult her—was to wrong her and himself.

The physician loved her; but it certainly was not any warmer feeling than friendship on her part that made her receive him at this late hour. The shame would be his own, if he ever again allowed such base suspicion to find place in his soul!

He breathed a deep sigh of relief. And when his

servant, who had lingered to pay the toll at the bridge, came up with him, Orion dismounted and desired him to lead his horse home, for he himself wished to return on foot, alone with his thoughts. He walked meditatively and slowly under the sycamores, but he had not gone far when, on the other side of the deserted road, he heard some one overtaking him with long, quick strides. He recognized the leech Philippus at a glance and was glad, for this proved to him how senseless and unjust his doubts had been, and how little ground he had for regarding the physician as a rival ; for indeed this man did not look like a happy lover. He hurried on with his head bent, as though under a heavy burthen, and clasped his hand to his forehead with a gesture of despair. No, this nocturnal wanderer had left no hour of bliss behind him ; and if his demeanor was calculated to rouse any feeling it was not envy, but pity.

Philippus did not heed Orion ; absorbed in himself, he strode on, moaning dully, as if in pain. For a few minutes he disappeared into a house whence came loud cries of suffering, and when he came out again, he walked on, shaking his head now and then, as a man who sees many things happen which his understanding fails to account for.

The end of his walk was a large, palatial building. The stucco had fallen off in places, and in the upper story the windows had been broken away till their openings were a world too wide. In former times this house had accommodated the State officers of Finance for the province, and the ground-floor rooms had been suitably and comfortably fitted up for the *Ideologos* — the supreme controller of this department, who usually resided at Alexandria, but who often spent some weeks at

Memphis when on a tour of inspection. But the Arabians had transferred the management of the finances of the whole country to the new capital of Fostat on the other shore of the river, and that of the monetary affairs of the decaying city had been incorporated with the treasurer's department of the Mukaukas' household. The senate of the city had found the expense of this huge building too heavy, and had been well content to let the lower rooms to Philippus and his Egyptian friend, Horapollo.

The two men occupied different rooms, but the same slaves attended to their common housekeeping and also waited on the physician's assistant, a modest and well-informed Alexandrian.

When Philippus entered his old friend's lofty and spacious study he found him still up, sitting before a great number of rolls of manuscript, and so absorbed in his work that he did not notice his late-coming comrade till the leech bid him good-evening. His only reply was an unintelligible murmur, for some minutes longer the old man was lost in study; at last, however, he looked up at Philippus, impatiently tossing an ivory ruler—which he had been using to open and smooth the papyrus—on to the table; and at the same moment a dark bundle under it began to move—this was the old man's slave who had long been sleeping there.

Three lamps on the writing-table threw a bright light on the old man and his surroundings, while the physician, who had thrown himself on a couch in a corner of the large room, remained in the dark.

What startled the midnight student was his housemate's unwonted silence; it disturbed him as the cessation of the clatter of the wheel disturbs a man who lives

in a mill. He looked at his friend with surprised enquiry, but Philippus was dumb, and the old man turned once more to his rolls of manuscript. But he had lost the necessary concentration; his brown hand, in which the blue veins stood out like cords, fidgeted with the scrolls and the ivory rule, and his sunken lips, which had before been firmly closed, were now twitching restlessly.

The man's whole aspect was singular and not altogether pleasing: his lean brown figure was bent with age, his thoroughly Egyptian face, with broad cheek-bones and outstanding ears, was seamed and wrinkled like oak-bark; his scalp was bare of its last hair, and his face clean-shaved, but for a few tufts of grey hair by way of beard, sprouting from the deep furrows on his cheeks and chin, like reeds from the narrow bed of a brook; the razor could not reach them there, and they gave him an untidy and uncared-for appearance. His dress answered to his face—if indeed that could be called dress which consisted of a linen apron and a white kerchief thrown over his shoulders after sundown. Still, no one meeting him in the road could have taken him for a beggar; for his linen was fine and as white as snow, and his keen, far-seeing eyes, above which, exactly in the middle, his bristly eyebrows grew strangely long and thick, shone and sparkled with clear intelligence, firm self-reliance, and a repellent severity which would no more have become an intending mendicant than the resolute and often scornful expression which played about his lips. There was nothing amiable, nothing prepossessing, nothing soft in this man's face; and those who knew what his life had been could not wonder that the years had failed to sweeten

his abrupt and contradictory acerbity or to transmute them into that kindly forbearance which old men, remembering how often they have stumbled and how many they have seen fall, sometimes find pleasure in practising.

He had been born, eighty years before, in the lovely island of Philae, beyond the cataract in the district of the temple of Isis, and under the shadow of the only Egyptian sanctuary in which the heathen cultus was kept up, and that publicly, as late as in his youth. Since Theodosius the Great, one emperor and one *Praefectus Augustalis* after another had sent foot-soldiers and cavalry above the falls to put an end to idolatry in the beautiful isle; but they had always been routed or destroyed by the brave Blemmyes who haunted the desert between the Nile and the Red Sea. These restless nomad tribes acknowledged the Isis of Philae as their tutelary goddess, and, by a very ancient agreement, the image of their patroness was carried every year by her priests in a solemn procession to the Blemmyes, and then remained for a few weeks in their keeping. Horapollo's father was the last of the horoscope readers, and his grandfather had been the last high-priest of the Isis of Philae. His childhood had been passed on the island but then a Byzantine legion had succeeded in beating the Blemmyes, in investing the island, and in plundering and closing the temple. The priests of Isis escaped the imperial raid and Horapollo had spent all his early years with his father, his grandfather, and two younger sisters, in constant peril and flight. His youthful spirit was unremittingly fed with hatred of the persecutors, the cruel contemners and exterminators of the faith of his forefathers; and this hatred rose to

irreconcilable bitterness after the massacre at Antioch where the imperial soldiery fell upon all his family, and his grandfather and two innocent sisters were murdered. These horrors were committed at the instigation of the Bishop, who denounced the Egyptian strangers as idolaters, and to whom the Roman prefect, a proud and haughty patrician, had readily lent the support of an armed force. It was owing to the narrowest chance—or, as the old man would have it, to the interposition of great Isis, that his father had been so happy as to get away with him and the treasures he had brought from the temple at Philae. Thus they had means to enable them to travel farther under an assumed name, and they finally settled in Alexandria. Here the persecuted youth changed his name, Horus, to its Greek equivalent, and henceforth he was known at home and in the schools as Apollo. He was highly gifted by nature, and availed himself with the utmost zeal of the means of learning that abounded in Alexandria; he labored indefatigably and dug deep into every field of Greek science, gaining, under his father's guidance, all the knowledge of Egyptian horoscopy, which was not wholly lost even at this late period.

In the midst of the contentious Christian sects of the capital, both father and son remained heathen and worshippers of Isis; and when the old priest died at an advanced age, Horapollo moved to Memphis where he led the quiet and secluded life of a student, mingling only now and then with the astronomers, astrologers, and calendar-makers at the observatory, or visiting the alchemists' laboratories, where, even in Christian Egypt, they still devoted themselves to attempts to transmute the baser into the noble metals. Alchemists and star-

readers alike soon detected the old man's superior knowledge, and in spite of his acrid and often offensively-repellent demeanor, took counsel of him on difficult questions. His fame had even reached the Arabs, and, when it was necessary to find the exact direction towards Mecca for the prayer niche in Amrû's new mosque, he was appealed to, and his decision was final.

Philippus had, some years since, been called to the old man's bedside in sickness, and being then a beginner and in no great request, he had given the best of his time and powers to the case. Horapollo had been much attracted by the young physician's wide culture and earnest studiousness; he had conceived a warm liking for him, the warmest perhaps that he had ever felt for any fellow-human since the death of his own family. At last the elder took the younger man into his heart with such overflowing affection, that it seemed as though his spirit longed to make up now for the stint of love it had hitherto shown. No father could have clung to his son with more fervent devotion, and when a relapse once more brought him to death's door he took Philippus wholly into his confidence, unrolled before his eyes the scroll of his inner and outer life from its beginnings, and made him his heir on condition that he should abide by him to the end.

Philippus, who, from the first, had felt a sympathetic attraction to this venerable and talented man, agreed to the bargain; and when he subsequently became associated with the old man in his studies, assisting him from time to time, Horapollo desired that he would help him to complete a work he hoped to finish before he died. It was a treatise on hieroglyphic writing, and

was to interpret the various signs so far as was still possible, and make them intelligible to posterity.

The old man disliked writing anything but Egyptian, using Greek unwillingly and clumsily, so he entrusted to his young friend the task of rendering his explanations into that language. Thus the two men — so different in age and character, but so closely allied in intellectual aims — led a joint existence which was both pleasant and helpful to both, in spite of the various eccentricities, the harshness and severity of the elder.

Horapollo lived after the manner of the early Egyptian priests, subjecting himself to much ablution and shaving; eating little but bread, vegetables, and poultry, and abstaining from pulse and the flesh of all beasts — not merely of the prohibited animal, swine; wearing nothing but pure linen clothing, and setting apart certain hours for the recitation of those heathen forms of prayer whose magic power was to compel the gods to grant the desires of those who thus appealed to them.

And if the old man had given his full confidence to Philippus, the leech, on his part, had no secrets from him; or, if he withheld anything, Horapollo, with wonderful acumen, was at once aware of it. Philippus had often spoken of Paula to his parental friend, describing her charms with all the fervor of a lover, but the old man was already prejudiced against her, if only as the daughter of a patrician and a prefect. All who bore these titles were to him objects of hatred, for a patrician and a prefect had been guilty of the blood of those he had held most dear. The Governor of Antioch, to be sure, had acted only under the orders of

the bishop ; but old Horapollo, and his father before him, from the first had chosen to throw all the blame on the prefect, for it afforded some satisfaction to the descendant of an ancestral race of priests to be able to vent all his wrathful spite on any one rather than on the minister of a god—be that god who or what he might.

So when Philippus praised Paula's dignified grandeur, her superior elegance, the height of her stature or the loftiness of her mind, the old man would bound up exclaiming: "Of course—of course!—Beware boy, beware! You are disguising haughtiness, conceit, and arrogance under noble names. The word 'patrician' includes everything we can conceive of as most insolent and inhuman; and those apes in purple who disgrace the Imperial throne pick out the worst of them, the most cold-hearted and covetous, to make prefects of them. And as they are, so are their children! Everything which they in their vainglory regard as 'beneath them' they tread into the dust—and we—you and I, all who labor with their hands in the service of the state—we, in their dull eyes, are beneath them. Mark me, boy! To-day the governor's daughter, the patrician maiden, can smile at you because she needs you; to-morrow she will cast you aside as I push away the old panther-skin which keeps my feet warm in winter, as soon as the March days come!"

Nor was his aversion less for the son of the Mukaukas, whom, however, he had never seen; when the leech had confessed to him how deep a grudge against Orion dwelt in the heart of Paula, old Horapollo had chuckled scornfully, and he exclaimed, as though he could read hearts and look into the future—: "They

snap at each other now, and in a day or two they will kiss again! Hatred and love are the opposite ends of the same rod; and how easily it is reversed! — Those two! — Like in blood is like in kind; — such people attract each other as the lodestone tends towards the iron and the iron towards the lodestone!"

But these and similar admonitions had produced little effect on the physician's sentiments; even Paula's repulse of his ardent appeal after she had moved to the house of Rufinus had failed to extinguish his hope of winning her at last. This very morning, in the course of the discussion as to the stewardship of her fortune, Paula had been ready and glad to accept him as her *Kyrios* — her legal protector and representative; but he now thought that he could perceive by various signs that his venerable friend was right: that the rod had been reversed, and that aversion had been transformed to love in the girl's heart. The anguish of this discovery was hard to bear. And yet Paula had never shown him such hearty warmth of manner, never had she spoken to him in a voice so soft and so full of feeling, as this evening in the garden. More cheerful and talkative than usual, she had constantly turned to address him, while he had felt his pain and torment of mind gradually eased, till in him too, sentiment had blossomed anew, and his intellectual power had expanded. Never — so he believed — had he expressed his thoughts better or more brilliantly than in that hour. Nor had she withheld her approval; she had heartily agreed with his views; and when, half an hour before midnight, he had gone with her to visit his patients, rapturous hopes had sprung once more in his breast. Ecstatically happy, like a man intoxicated, he had, by

her own desire, accompanied her into her sitting-room, and then — and there. . .

Poor, disappointed man, sitting on the divan in a dark corner of the spacious room! In his soul hitherto the intellect had alone made itself heard, the voice of the heart had never been listened to.

How he had found his way home he never knew. All he remembered was that, in the course of duty, he had gone into the house of a man whose wife — the mother of several children — he had left at noon in a dying state; that he had seen her a corpse, surrounded by loud but sincere mourners; that he had gone on his way, weighed down by their grief and his own, and that he had entered his friend's rooms rather than his own, to feel safe from himself. Life had no charm, no value for him now; still, he felt ashamed to think that a woman could thus divert him from the fairest aims of life, that he could allow her to destroy the peace of mind he needed to enable him to carry out his calling in the spirit of his friend Rufinus. He knew his house-mate well and felt that he would only pour vitriol into his wounds, but it was best so. The old man had already often tried to bring down Paula's image from its high pedestal in his soul, but always in vain; and even now he should not succeed. He would mar nothing, scatter nothing to the winds, tread nothing in the dust but the burning passion, the fevered longing for her, which had fired his blood ever since that night when he had vanquished the raving Masdakite. That old sage by the table, on whose stern, cold features the light fell so brightly, was the very man to accomplish such a work of destruction, and Philippus awaited his first words as a wounded man watches the

surgeon heating the iron with which to cauterize the sore.

Poor disappointed wretch, sorely in need of a healing hand!

He lay back on the divan, and saw how his friend leaned over his scroll as if listening, and fidgeted up and down in his arm-chair.

It was clear that Horapollo was uneasy at Philippus' long silence, and his pointed eyebrows, raised high on his brow, plainly showed that he was drawing his own conclusions from it—no doubt the right ones. The peace must soon be broken, and Philippus awaited the attack. He was prepared for the worst; but how could he bring himself to make his torturer's task easy for him. Thus many minutes slipped away; while the leech was waiting for the old man to speak, Horapollo waited for Philippus. However, the impatience and curiosity of the elder were stronger than the young man's craving for comfort; he suddenly laid down the roll of manuscript, impatiently snatched up the ivory stick which he had thrown aside, set his heavy seat at an angle with a shove of amazing vigor for his age, turned full on Philippus, and asked him, in a loud voice, pointing his ruler at him as if threatening him with it:

"So the play is out. A tragedy, of course!"

"Hardly, since I am still alive," replied the other.

"But there is inward bleeding, and the wound is painful," retorted the old man. Then, after a short pause, he went on: "Those who will not listen must feel! The fox was warned of the trap, but the bait was too tempting! Yesterday there would still have been time to pull his foot out of the spring, if only he

had sincerely desired it ; he knew the hunter's guile. Now the foe is down on the victim ; he has not spared his weapons, and there lies the prey dumb with pain and ignominy, cursing his own folly. — You seem inclined for silence this evening. Shall I tell you just how it all came about ?”

“ I know only too well,” said Philippus

“ While I, to be sure, can only imagine it !” growled the old man. “ So long as that patrician hussy needed the poor beast of burthen she could pet it and throw barley and dates to it. Now she is rolling in gold and living under a sheltering roof, and hey presto, the discarded protector is sent to the right about in no time ! This mistress of the hearts of our weak and bondage-loving sex raises this rich Adonis to fill the place of the hapless, overgrown leech, just as the sky lets the sun rise when the pale moon sinks behind the hills. If that is not the fact give me the lie !”

“ I only wish I could,” sighed Philippus. “ You have seen rightly, wonderfully rightly — and yet, as wrongly as possible.”

“ Dark indeed !” said the old man quietly. “ But I can see even in the dark. The facts are certain, though you are still so blinded as not to see their first cause. However, I am satisfied to know that your delusion has come to so abrupt, and in my opinion so happy, an end. To its cause — a woman, as usual — I am perfectly indifferent. Why should I needlessly ascribe to her any worse sin than she had committed ? If only for your sake I will avoid doing so, for an honorable soul clings to those whom it sees maligned. Still, it seems to me that it is for you to speak, not for me. I should know you for a philosopher, without such persistent silence ;

and as for myself, I am not altogether bereft of curiosity, in spite of my eighty years."

At this Philippus hastily rose and pacing the room while he spoke, or pausing occasionally in front of the old man, he poured out with glowing cheeks and eager gestures, the history of his hopes and sufferings — how Paula had filled him with fresh confidence, and had invited him to her rooms — only to show him her whole heart; she had been strongly moved, surprised at herself, but unable and unwilling to conceal from him the happiness that had come into her life. She had spoken to him, her best friend, as a burthened soul pours itself out to a priest: had confessed all that she had felt since the funeral of the deceased Mukaukas, and said that she felt convinced now that Orion had come to a right mind again after his great sin.

"And that there was so much joy over him in heaven," interrupted Horapollo, "that she really could not delay doing her cast-off lover the honor of inviting his sympathy!"

"On the contrary. It was with the utmost effort that she uttered all her heart prompted her to tell; she had nothing to look for from me but mockery, warning, and reproach, and yet she opened her heart to me."

"But why? To what end?" shrieked the old man. "Shall I tell you. — Because a man who is a friend must still be half a lover, and a woman cannot bear to give up even a quarter of one."

"Not so!" exclaimed Philippus, indignantly interrupting him. "It was because she esteems and values me, — because she regards me as a brother, and — I am not a vain man — and could not bear — those were her very words — to cheat me of my affection for even an

hour! It was noble, it was generous, worthy of her! And though every fibre of my nature rebelled I found myself compelled to admire her sincerity, her true friendship, her disregard of her own feelings, and her womanly tenderness! — Nay, do not interrupt me again, do not laugh at me. It is no small matter for a proud girl, conscious of her own dignity, to lay bare her heart's weakness to a man who, as she knows, loves her, as she did just now to me. She called me her benefactor and said she would be a sister to me; and whatever motive you — who hate her out of a habit of prejudice without really knowing her — may choose to ascribe her conduct to, I — I believe in her, and understand her.

“Could I refuse to grasp the hand she held out to me as she entreated me with tears in her eyes to be still her friend, her protector, and her Kyrios! And yet, and yet! — Where shall I find resolution enough to ask of her who excites me to the height of passion no more than a kind glance, a clasp of the hand, an intelligent interest in what I say? How am I to preserve self-control, calmness, patience, when I see her in the arms of that handsome young demi-god whom I scorned only yesterday as a worthless scoundrel? What ice may cool the fire of this burning heart? What spear can transfix the dragon of passion which rages here? I have lived almost half my life without ever feeling or yearning for the love of which the poets sing. I have never known anything of such feelings but through the pangs of some friend whose weakness had roused my pity; and now, when love has come upon me so late with all its irresistible force — has subjugated me, cast me into bondage — how shall I, how can I get free?

"My faithful friend, you who call me your son, whom I am glad to hear speak to me as 'boy,' and 'child,' who have taken the place of the father I lost so young — there is but one issue: I must leave you and this city — flee from her neighborhood — seek a new home far from her with whom I could have been as happy as the Saints in bliss, and who has made me more wretched than the damned in everlasting fire. Away, away! I will go — I must go unless you, who can do so much, can teach me to kill this passion or to transmute it into calm, brotherly regard."

He stood still, close in front of the old man and hid his face in his hands. At his favorite's concluding words, Horapollo had started to his feet with all the vigor of youth; he now snatched his hand down from his face, and exclaimed in a voice hoarse with indignation and the deepest concern:

"And you can say that in earnest? Can a sensible man like you have sunk so deep in folly? Is it not enough that your own peace of mind should have been sacrificed, flung at the feet of this — what can I call her? — Do you understand at last why I warned you against the Patrician brood? — The faith, gratitude, and love of a good man! — What does she care for them? Unhook the whiting; away with him in the dust! Here comes a fine large fish who perhaps may swallow the bait! — Do you want to ruin, for her sake, and the sake of that rascally son of the governor, the comfort and happiness of an old man's last years when he has become accustomed to love you, who so well deserve it, as his own son? Will you — an energetic student, you — a man of powerful intellect, zealous in your duty, and in favor with the gods — will you pine like a de-

sented maiden or spring from the Leucadian rock like love-sick Sappho in the play while the spectators shake with laughter? You must stay, Boy, you must stay; and I will show you how a man must deal with a passion that dishonors him."

"Show me," replied Philippus in a dull voice. "I ask no more. Do you suppose that I am not myself ashamed of my own weakness? It ill beseems me of all men, formed by fate for anything rather than to be a sighing and rapturous lover. I will struggle with it, wrestle with it with all the strength that is in me; but here, in Memphis, close to her and as her Kyrios, I should be forced every day to see her, and day after day be exposed to fresh and humiliating defeat! Here, constantly near her and with her, the struggle must wear me out—I should perish, body and soul. The same place, the same city, cannot hold her and me."

"Then *she* must make way for you," croaked Horus. Philippus raised his bowed head and asked, in some surprise and with stern reproof:

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing," replied the other airily. He shrugged his shoulders and went on more gently: "Memphis has greater need of you than of the patrician hussy." Then he shook himself as if he were cold, struck his breast and added: "All is turmoil here within; I can neither help nor advise you. Day must soon be dawning in the east; we will try to sleep. A knot can often be untied by daylight which by lamplight seems inextricable, and perhaps on my sleepless couch the goddess may reveal to me the way I have promised to show you. A little more lightness of heart would do neither of us any harm. — Try to forget your own

griefs in those of others; you see enough of them every day. To wish you a good night would probably be waste of words, but I may wish you a soothing one. You may count on my aid; but you will not let me, a poor old man, hear another word about flight and departure and the like, will you? No, no. I know you better, Philippus — you will never treat your lonely old friend so!"

These were the tenderest words that the leech had ever heard from the old man's lips, and it comforted him when Horapollo pressed him to his heart in a hasty embrace. He thought no more of the hint that it was Paula's part to make room for him. But the old man had spoken in all seriousness, for, no sooner was he alone than he petulantly flung down the ivory ruler on the table, and murmured, at first angrily and then scornfully, his eyes sparkling the while:

"For this true heart, and to preserve myself and the world from losing such a man, I would send a dozen such born hussies to Amentis.* Hey, hey! My beauty! So this noble leech is not good enough for the like of us; he may be tossed away like a date-stone that we spit out? Well, every one to his taste; but how would it be if old Horapollo taught us his value? Wait a bit, wait! — With a definite aim before my eyes I have never yet failed to find my way — in the realm of science, of course; but what is life — the life of the sage but applied knowledge? And why should not old Horapollo, for once before he dies, try what his brains can contrive to achieve in the busy world of outside human existence? Pleasant as you may think it to be in Memphis with your lover, fair heart-breaker, you will

* The Nether world of the ancient Egyptians.

have to make way for the plaything you have so lightly tossed aside! Aye, you certainly will, depend upon that my beauty, depend upon that! — Here, Anubis!”

He gave the slave, who had fallen asleep again under the table, a kick with his bare foot, and while Anubis lighted his master to his sleeping-room, and helped him in his long and elaborate ablutions, Horapollo never ceased muttering broken sentences and curses, or laughing maliciously to himself.

END OF VOL. I.

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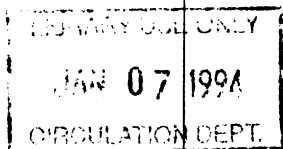
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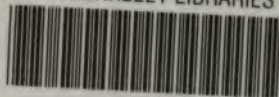
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